

THOUGHTS

CONCERNING

MAN's CONDITION and DUTIES
in this life,

A N D

His HOPES in the world to come.

*Keep thy heart free, and lifted up to God, because
thou hast here no abiding city.*

Thomas a Kempis, b. 1. ch. 23.

*Know that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more
than any thing in the world.* Id. b. 3. ch. 27.

By ALEXANDER Lord *Pitligo*, deceased.

A L S O,

A SHORT CATECHISM.

By another hand.

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T H O U G H T S



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By ALEXANDER Lørd *Pittsigo*, deceased.

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TO the READER.

I Have nothing to say in behalf of the following papers, but that they are chiefly intended for the great body of Christians, called the common people, who have but little time, and as little money, for buying and reading large books. The character of such readers makes it likewise necessary that this small performance should be as plain and familiar as possible.

I mentioned some causes of the thoughtlessness of mankind, which possibly may be reckoned more applicable to those in high stations. But the lowest ranks of men are too much set upon their pleasures, and are still projecting to raise themselves higher. As for those in higher stations, when they are arrived at the utmost their ambition can desire, (such is the emptiness of things), they are continually searching after new pleasures and amusements.

When the woful effects of the fall were taken notice of (chap. 4.), the list might have been made fuller, and more said concerning the corruption of the heart: but perhaps there is enough said to make us sensible of our fallen state, which pride seems to have occasioned; as may be inferred

ferred from the present disgrace and misery we are under; a frail body, full of diseases, and other no less humbling things. And what have we to boast of as to the soul? A defective memory, a confused judgment, a giddy imagination, a perverse will, a crowd of passions, that give us no rest, and make the earth desolate.

But, on the other hand, we ought not to forget the happy prospect which the scripture gives us of a glorious and blessed state hereafter, wherein all imperfections and sorrows are done away.

In chap. II. the cross was brought in a little abruptly; and perhaps too hastily dismissed. This is indeed true, that the crosses and vexations which people create to one another, are very much owing to the mutual defects of their own tempers. But the cross implies all the variety of suffering we can possibly imagine, and it is the necessary medicine for curing all the disorders which sin hath brought upon us. It may be reckoned, that every cross laid on us by the unsearchable providence of God, is fitted to some disorder in our nature, frequently unknown to us; and we may conclude in general, that since our blessed Saviour (who was purity itself) made choice of the cross, and sufferings,

sufferings, we (who are polluted with sin) can have no other way of arriving at happiness. Holy writ confirms it often.

I do not pretend to have discovered all the faults of the book. In chap. 17. chearfulness is called a virtue; which perhaps will be disputed: for though a certain sort of chearfulness may be said to be the effect of the highest virtue, (joy and peace being fruits of the Holy Spirit, and a good conscience a continual feast); yet ordinary and natural chearfulness is no more to be called a virtue, than boldness, timorousness, bashfulness, or even sadness, when they proceed merely from the natural temper. I grant, the chearfulness which proceeds merely from the natural temper is not to be called a virtue; but the chearfulness I had in view, was a certain mixture of gaiety and complaisance, in opposition to moroseness and sullenness, which can never do honour to religion.

Much more might have been added, if the design had not been to make a very small book: and what is chiefly intended by it is, to stir up people to the study of the holy scriptures, in which all is contained that we ought to believe and practise.

tise. There are many pious books*, which, though inferior to the scriptures, are to be highly esteemed, as well as several books of an inferior class: the reader may rank them as he thinks proper. And when we have no book in our hands, we have the excellency of the Christian religion to think of, the purity and peaceableness of its doctrine, with the comfortable hopes it gives its sincere followers. The thoughts of death, judgment, and eternity, will sometimes enter into the mind, notwithstanding all the pains that we are at to banish them from it; and at such times, what can support us but the doctrine of the gospel? To say nothing of the terrors of death, we had need to have recourse to religion to support us in the common difficulties of life.

* Such as the Imitation of Christ, and several books of that spiritual kind, proper for all ranks and conditions.

THOUGHTS

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CONCERNING

MAN'S Duties and Hopes.

CHAP. I.

*The advantage of thinking seriously on
our condition.*

"**M**AN that is born of a wo-
" man, is of few days, and
" full of trouble. He co-
" meth forth like a flower, and
" is cut down: he fleeth also as a
" shadow, and continueth not *."
" Verily every man at his best state
" is altogether vanity †." Our own
experience teaches us the same truths;
but as we know them only in a con-
fused manner, so we think very little
about them. Our short time passes

* Job xiv. 1. 2.

† Psal. xxxix. 5.

A

away

away in folly, till we are surprised by death. Several causes may be given for this thoughtlessness. Our heart is almost continually intent upon some pleasure or diversion, and our head taken up with airy projects; or if we find ourselves sometimes a little disengaged, and in a disposition to think of our true state, and the great end of our creation, we are presently discouraged with gloomy prospects, and the misery that casts up to us.

No doubt we are poor and miserable: but this should not hinder us from considering the whole of our condition, since we pretend to be reasonable creatures, and often to be very wise.

A little consideration might shew us, that we are not miserable beyond hope of recovery: very few are altogether without some expectation of happiness in the next world, after this *painful life* is ended; and if we give attention to the scripture, we shall find many passages to confirm

our hopes. The same holy person Job says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." He adds, "And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another*." Here is a glorious expectation of deliverance, and of the resurrection. Our blessed Saviour and his apostles give that doctrine still a greater force.

Mankind therefore should not be without hopes, but their confidence should be only in their Redeemer. For, alas! what miserable creatures are we!

We cannot think too meanly of ourselves, as we are fallen creatures, and so wretchedly disfigured by sin. But lest the dwelling too much upon this thought should cast us into despair, we must think of the mercy and power of God, who can renew us body and soul. He can "create

* Job xix. 25. 26. 27.

“ in us a clean heart,” and “ change
“ our vile body, that it may be fa-
“ shioned like unto his glorious bo-
“ dy *.”

“ We were created at first “ after
“ the image of God.” Who could
believe this, considering what we are
now? But the scripture declares it,
and that is enough. We even find in
our present state something that looks
like great about us. We abhor to be
thought capable of base actions. We
aim at a good character before men.
Again, nothing in this world can ful-
ly satisfy our hearts, which looks as
if they were made for the enjoyment
of God, since nothing less than he
can fill them. And the abhorrence
of being thought base, looks like some
remains of dignity in our nature.
When a person has no sense of
shame, there is nothing that is good
to be expected from him.

But as we are *high* in some respects,
we are very *low* in others. These are
two points which we must constantly

• Phil. iii. 21.

keep

keep in view, that we may not either be proud like the devil, or level ourselves with the beasts.

C H A P. II.

The true knowledge of ourselves, and the state of things, only to be had from the scriptures.

EXperience may teach us somewhat, but the scriptures only can teach us fully and truly. We must read attentively, otherwise it does not deserve the name of reading. Another thing requisite for understanding the scriptures is *an honest heart*: We must bring with us a sincere intention of doing our duty, as soon as we understand it; without which we only cheat ourselves.

We must not read that we may flatter our vanity, or to appear knowing. The end of our reading, and of all our actions, must be to please God, and to give glory to his name.

If we read the holy scriptures with

these good dispositions, or a right frame of heart, we shall learn out of them all that is necessary to make us perfectly happy in the next world, and even much happier here than otherwise we could be: For the scriptures have come from the Spirit of God, the fountain of all wisdom. There may be very useful books written by good men, but they are only borrowed lights, and dim in comparison of the scriptures.

When we open those sacred books, we should put up a private petition to Almighty God, "That he would give us the true understanding of what we read," lest we read like children. We must also pray, "That God would give us a ready heart to obey his will in all that he pleases to discover of it to us," lest we read like hypocrites.

We cannot deny that our duty is laid down plainly to us in the scriptures: common sense is enough to let us see it. But we are for the most part in such a hurry when we read, or hear

hear others, that all goes for nothing. Instead of minding what we read or hear, our thoughts are carried away with a thousand impertinent things. And suppose our attention were greater than it is, yet our foolish desires and passions blind us; and "the cares of the world choke the good seed," as our blessed Saviour informs us.

But I say again, our duty is plain. Our Saviour condescended to speak to the meanest capacities, and made use of the most familiar parables. His apostles teach us our duty also: and we find it in the Old Testament itself. God is never wanting upon his part.

On the other hand, we cannot deny that there are several things in the scriptures very dark, according to our natural apprehension, and which can only be made intelligible by the same Spirit from whence they came. But to this Spirit no bounds can be set: it can teach the soul immediately; it can explain dark passages; it can make

make a light to spring up in the soul, without letters or sounds, or any thing that can strike the outward senses. He who formed the soul can instruct it after many ways and manners that human reason can have no comprehension of.

All we have to do is, to follow the light that is given us; and when God sees us fit for higher things, he will not be wanting. We ought not to aim at what is extraordinary. David said, "He did not exercise himself in things too high for him, but behaved like a weaned child*." Such high aims are liable to the punishment of delusion, which they well deserve.

C H A P. III.

Of some principal truths taught us in holy writ.

THE scriptures teach us our duty, plainly, fully, and truly. These three qualities cannot but concur in

* Psal. cxxxi. 1. 2.

them,

them, since they are the inspirations of God. They also teach us many things concerning the divine nature and our own, the end we are made for, and the course we must follow in order to eternal happiness.

We feel the inconstancy and disorder of every thing here. Our body is a mass of corruption, and liable every moment to pain and torture in every pore and atom of it, and the whole fabric ready to fall to pieces, like a ruinous house. Our soul, though of an immortal nature, is however in a very poor state here: passions, imaginations, delusions, cares, sorrows, these are commonly the troublesome guests of the soul. We have not names for all the evils we feel and fear. All the elements are against us: the air we breathe often carries death in it; men are our open enemies; and "the devil walketh about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*."

There are other things in our pre-

* 1 Pet. v. 8.

sent state more agreeable ; pleasures of the body and mind. Hardly is any person so destitute as to have no friend ; and one single friend is a great treasure.

But still man's life is full of trouble, and he is full of contradictions himself ; some good qualities in him, and many bad.

It is the scripture that shews us how these contrary things have come to pass. It informs us, that the first man *Adam* was created in an upright and happy state ; but that he fell, and all his posterity in him, since he could produce none in his corruption but corrupt creatures like himself.

It informs us, that God was pleased to pardon *Adam* and his posterity, at the intercession of *Jesus Christ*, who took our nature upon him, (except the sinful part of it), and satisfied the divine justice by his bitter death *.

It informs us, that though man was

* Man's redemption by *Jesus Christ* is frequently mentioned in scripture, and is one of the mysteries unfathomable by human reason.

thus

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thus pardoned, yet he was driven out of Paradise, and the earth *curst* for his sake; that being condemned to hard labour, and many vexations, he might be in less hazard of doting on his present jail, and might have his eye fixed on a better world.

It informs us, that man's knowledge was much darkened by the fall, and all his faculties distempered and poisoned; that he is now a proud, angry, foolish creature; timorous, slothful, restless; every thing by turns, and nothing for any continuance.

It informs us, on the other hand, that there are great remains of dignity in our nature; that, notwithstanding all our defects and miseries, we are still the children of God, and "joint heirs with Christ." What amazing and endearing expressions!

It informs us, that our title to these glorious and blessed promises is of the pure mercy of God, and only owing to the merits of his well-beloved Son; that we must take nothing to ourselves but *shame and confusion*, nor
flatter

flatter ourselves with the hopes of being acceptable to God without faith and repentance, and the imitation of all the virtues of our Lord and Saviour, as far as is possible for us.

These are some of the principal truths which the holy scriptures teach us, and what we could never have discovered without revelation. It helps to reconcile the contradictions we find in our own nature. Man is neither beast, nor devil, and far less a God; but he has something in him of all the three: experience shews it in his actions. Things are done by man which look more diabolical than human; and there are things brutal to the last degree; but there are other things (it is a pity they are so few) which look very like divine.

C H A P. IV.

The unhappy effects of the fall considered a little farther.

BY the fall of our first parents the divine image is very much disfigured in us, and we are sunk in wickedness and folly. It is necessary to keep our folly in mind, for we are often proud of our being wicked; but the remembrance of our being foolish would help to keep us humble.

We see what men are in the present age. If we look backwards, and believe the report of those who have lived before us, we shall find matters very little better. All histories are full of the corruptions of men, and their violence against one another; and the sacred history informs us, that when there were but two brothers upon the earth, the one killed the other; and that wickedness, in the course of a few generations, came to that height, that all

B

mankind.

mankind were destroyed by the flood, except one single family, which was saved in the ark, with so many creatures as *Noah* was ordered to take into it, to preserve their kinds. Every body talks of the flood of *Noah*; it were well worth the while to think seriously of that dreadful event, and the cause that brought it about; I mean the abominations of fallen men.

Men still go on in the old way, so deep is the corruption of our nature. "The works of the flesh are manifest," says St Paul, "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." He adds, "That they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God *."

Thus the holy apostle hath given us a sad list of our disorders and crimes, (the miserable effects of the

* Gal. v. 19. 20. 21.

fall),

fall), and he could have named more, if he had thought it needful.

St *John* reduceth all the disorders that are in the world, to “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” But the flesh is often used to signify our whole corrupt nature, and the motions of it in general, in opposition to the Spirit of God, or whatever remains of it in us. Flesh is opposed to spirit, as nature is opposed to grace.

These unhappy consequences of the fall are the evils that have seized upon the soul of man; and sometimes they are called *moral evils*; as other evils that have seized both soul and body, are only called *natural evils*, and there is no sin in them.

The natural evils of the soul are darkness and confusion of the understanding, and irregular passions of the heart: for passions are not vices, unless they are viciously directed. But at least our passions and ignorance give us a great deal of trouble;

* 1 John ii. 16.

the very defects of our memory are a vexation to us, and create us much labour: By the natural evils of the soul, I understand no more than the defects presently mentioned: nothing is sin but what proceeds from a perverse and deliberate will, commonly called *a bad heart*.

The natural evils of the body are sickness, pain, weariness, and whatever people use to complain of; for they seldom complain of the infirmities of their mind.

Then we have the evil of things without us to think of; the disorders of the air, fire, and water, which make our habitation of earth often very comfortless. Without being at sea, we are frightened in our houses with storms of wind, thunder and lightning; earthquakes (though seldom felt in this island) are still more dreadful; every thing is in a violent state, and opposite to man as a guilty creature.

The curse of the earth certainly implies more than we imagine; and
with-

without some heinous offence, such a punishment would not have been inflicted; for God put man at first into a paradise of delights, and “saw” that every thing he had made was “very good.”

There is a mixture of good still: but the present state is nevertheless a state of trouble and distress for the greatest part; and the sons of *Adam* are not to expect their paradise here.

C H A P. V.

Vexation and suffering the lot of all men.

THIS is a plain case, much felt by every body, and often mentioned in holy writ. But we see, and feel, and forget.

“All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” This we are told by *Solomon*, the wisest of men, and the most fortunate as to every thing this world could afford. Let his history be read with attention. He seems to have

been raised up by Providence to shew all men that come after him the emptiness and disquiet of the present world ; for who can make so much of it as he did ? and yet we see what he says of it.

But mens heads are turned. This world, rotten as it is, deludes us ; and almost every body fancies he shall do better than *Solomon*.

The lowest ranks are still aiming to be higher ; still climbing, and dashing themselves to pieces. If some few get into a better fortune than they were born to, what trouble and sorrow have they with it ? It would be much wiser (as *St Paul* advises) “ to be content with food and raiment.” Most servants are easier than their masters. I confess it is not only because men think they would be easier in a higher condition, that they seek to raise themselves ; it is their pride also which makes them climb and thrust forward.

But as suffering is the lot of all men, the highest (generally speaking) suffer

suffer most : their station exposes them to envy, their pride grows still more impatient of contradiction, and they have great difficulty in keeping measures with people as proud as themselves. Then, as to the natural evils of sickness and death, the highest ranks are no less exposed than the lowest ; they are rather more, and often destroy themselves by their intemperance.

Temptation, danger, and pain, are every where : men are very much alike by nature ; death makes them perfectly equal.

We carry within us the principles or seeds of our vexation and suffering : outward things could not affect us as they do, if it were not for that inward corruption. How long shall we continue in our dreams ? “ O ye sons of men,” says *David*, “ how long will ye love vanity, “ and seek after leasing* ?” The things of the world are but lies, and have no reality. We hear of “ the

* Psal. iv. 2.

“ pleasures

“ pleasures of sin for a season *,” which *Moses* wisely despised ; for they are but lies, because of their short continuance, and the sorrows to which they expose us afterwards.

All are born to suffer. It is the present establishment of things, and none can alter it. “ Great travel is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam,——from him that sitteth on a throne of glory, unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes †.” We may be well persuaded that *Solomon* himself has been sick and weary. His outward splendor was a figure of the glorious state which things shall one day be in : but as he was born of a woman, he must have had trouble in his own person. He is likewise a remarkable instance of the danger of prosperity and pleasure, since notwithstanding all his wisdom he fell into a stupid idolatry.

* Heb. xi. 25.

† Eccles. xl. 1. 3.

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C H A P. VI.

Of Death.

ONE grievous effect of the fall was death: for God only threatened it upon man's disobedience. "It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment." This is a sentence we cannot think of without horror. Nature shrinks at its dissolution. Every creature that hath life, endeavours to preserve it. To say nothing of future apprehensions, nature hath implanted in us a dread of losing our present existence.

But with rational creatures there would be less fear of death, if it were not for the *judgment* that comes after it. Men would fear death, and shun danger, as other living creatures do; but if they thought of what is to follow, they would be in great perplexity; and nothing could support them but the consideration of the goodness of God.

But

But alas ! we think very little about death. We are stupid and drunk with the low pleasures of this world ; and when we begin to think of that fatal period, we soon give it over, the prospect is so dark and dismal.

It is not always because we are sorry to part with the joys of life, that the thoughts of death overwhelm us. We find persons whose life may be reckoned a burden to them, and yet they would gladly lengthen it if they could ; which is a strong presumption that they have some fear of entering into another state, and undergoing the judgment of God.

If that were not the case, if there were not a secret impression of a future state, simple death could not be so terrible a prospect to a reasonable creature ; it would be but like a deep sleep, and a real relief from many troubles. No more oppression, no more calumny, no more toil, no more pain, no more grief. “ There the wicked

“ cease

“ cease from troubling, and there
“ the weary are at rest *.”

But naturally some horror must be
felt at the thoughts of our leaving
the body : for the soul knows not
whither it is going, and “ it is a fear-
“ ful thing to fall into the hands of
“ the living God.”

Let us not however be so afraid of
death, as if we had no hope in God.
Our Saviour hath “ overcome the
“ sharpness of death, and opened the
“ kingdom of heaven to all belie-
“ vers ;” that is, to all who truly be-
lieve his doctrine, and faithfully imi-
tate his example. Belief alone is not
sufficient, for “ the devils believe and
“ tremble.”

Let us think of death, as what it is,
to wit, a release from a painful life,
and the end of a tedious journey. At
the same time, we must look upon it
as the punishment of guilt in our first
parents, and a just condemnation of
our own pride. It is very just that
our high heads should be laid low,

* Job iii. 12.

and

and that the worms should feed on our bodies, which many of us have treated with so much expence and care.

Let us, on the other hand, think of death, as an entrance into a state of happiness, or into a *house* which our blessed Saviour hath prepared for those that love him. This prospect would fill us with joy, when we consider, that "our light affliction, which" "is but for a moment, worketh for" "us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

But our composition is very strange! neither the thoughts of heaven nor hell affect us; we live as if we were never to die; the present perishing things only touch us; we talk of hopes and fears in the next world, but our affections are only set upon this earth; any little good we do is chiefly "to be seen of men;" and if we abstain from any evil, it is chiefly for fear of their reproach. Yet those very men we are thus afraid of, must die like ourselves; and we see our friends

friends and acquaintance dropping every day : but for all this we never change our conduct ; we live as if we were immortal, and our names never to be forgotten !

How would the thoughts of death put a stop to our extravagant and silly pursuits ! how would it check our unlawful pleasures, and make us moderate in those that are lawful !

We are but like shadows or apparitions upon this earth, and must soon give place to others, perhaps as vain and foolish as ourselves. Who is it that reflects seriously on these things ?
 " Lord help us so to live, that we
 " may not be too much afraid to
 " die."

How dreadful will it be at death to look back upon a life spent in drinking, swearing, lewdness, covetousness, fraud, oppression, or in any of the works of the flesh ! not only to think upon the evil we have done, but the good that we have omitted ! If some particular persons seem to die without any appearance of remorse or fear,

we are not sure but they feel more than they acknowledge, and that they may take pains to conceal what they feel. If there be no remorse at all, it must either be from stupidity, or a hardness of heart, contracted by stifling the repeated checks of conscience. For, generally speaking, conscience does stir; and it is very natural to fear that fatal period, which not only separates us from all that is dear to us in this world, but which is like casting us from a precipice into a gulf without bottom.

C H A P. VII.

The goodness and wisdom of God in the present establishment of things.

MAN's first state was a state of innocence; the present is a state of guilt. We need not wonder then to find many things uneasy to us, since we are criminals, (being the posterity of *Adam*), and sent here for a short time of trial. We are not absolutely

lutely condemned, but conditionally : that is, if we do wickedly, we shall die ; and if we do righteously, we shall live. *St Paul* confirms it : “ If ye “ live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but “ if ye through the Spirit do mortify “ the deeds of the body, ye shall “ live *.”

Now since the heart of man is corrupted by sin, and his understanding so darkened, that his thoughts are set upon the present world ; it is happy for him that he is not now in a paradise, and that this world must disappoint and vex him ; otherwise (as is observed already) he would have been more allured than he is.

The earth was therefore deprived of its primitive fruitfulness and beauty, that man might set his heart less upon it ; his body was made weak, that he might feel the uneasiness of toil ; and his labour must be attended with uncertainty, to lessen his covetousness, and to teach him to de-

* Rom. viii. 13.

pend upon God only for his necessary subsistence.

The earth was fitted to the state of man's frail body, and his body fitted to the disorders of his soul; all fitted well together. To have put a perverse mischievous soul into a body that could not be wearied, would have produced terrible effects. The necessities of refreshment and rest give some little peace to mankind. Nor is our weakness a greater restraint upon our mischievousness and tyranny, than upon our debauchery and intemperance.

The wisdom and goodness of God is exceeding remarkable in mixing and tempering all things so well. Man's violence is restrained by his weakness; his life has been shortened once and again; and it is very probable the earth is less pleasant and fertile since the flood.

But still a thousand delights and beauties remain. *The light is sweet*; the sun is glorious; and the moon and stars have their particular beauties.

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ties. Then there are the numberless beauties of the field, the corn, the grass, the trees, flowers, herbs, fountains, rivers, the sea, every thing so agreeable and so useful, that we would almost think ourselves in paradise still.

All our senses, as well as our eyes, are delightfully entertained; the ear with music, and so of all the rest. And how many pleasures are there of the understanding and the heart! It is pleasure to acquire knowledge, and more pleasure to acquire friendship.

But our eyes must soon be closed as to all created objects, and sickness makes us lose the relish of them in the mean time: nothing is durable and fixed. But all this uncertainty is good with respect to a higher end. We are made for a better world, and it is good for us to get warnings that we must leave the present.

Death itself is good, as being a state of rest to those "that die in the Lord;" a state at least (as is generally believed) where temptation is at an end. It is sometimes good with

respect to those that survive, for it rides the earth of monsters : but this is the most melancholy consideration of all, that such monsters should be.

Let us think of the goodness and wisdom of God, in ordering the different periods or stages of life. How fit is it that man is born helpless, to create compassion and care ! the distress of the mother raises pity, as well as the condition of the crying infant. How proper is childhood for taming and instructing the fierce and ignorant spirit ! Youth has its discipline too. Riper years have their several crosses laid upon them ; and poor old age is made up of weariness and sorrow, in order to make us leave the world with the better will.

The changes of the seasons are of benefit, and some pleasure. We love variety ; and those changes help to make us depend a little more on Providence, and also to keep us in mind that nothing is lasting here : the spring draws on the summer, the summer the harvest, the harvest the winter,

winter, and the winter the spring ; and they are necessary as well as beautiful in their time.

Nor should we forget the goodness and wisdom of God in appointing work and labour for man since the fall : it not only restrains him from doing mischief, but refreshes his spirits, when it is not excessive. None are so dull and heavy as those that are idle : we see what difficulty they have to pass the time, and the silly diversions they fall upon to keep up their spirits. The lower ranks of mankind are happy in that point, if they knew it. We may plainly see the hand of God in the contrivance of labour ; for he might easily have made the earth not only produce without any pains or toil, but he might also have made us less subject to other necessities. This body gives much work to feed it, and clothe it, and keep it clean. But his wisdom extends to every thing ; the good of particular persons is provided for, as well as the quiet of society.

But

But there are yet higher things to consider. Man was made to love God. If there had been more perfection in created things, he would have forgot his chief end entirely. Our own imperfections should make us think ourselves less lovely than commonly we do, and consequently beat down our pride : and the imperfections of others seem designed to make us dote less upon them, and to raise our love to the fountain of all beauty and perfection, though we cannot see it. Our friends cannot help us in the greatest distress, but "God is mighty to save." Our friends even make us suffer by their defects, and we make them suffer by ours. Among the best friends there is reserve and closeness, but we may lay ourselves open to God, as hoping that he will help us without *upbraiding us*.

I say, the defects of all created things are of use to make us look up to the all-perfect creator. Our decaying bodies, which we pamper and adorn,

adorn, are soon to be the food of worms. But this may make us think of a more durable and finer state in another world. And we should often cast our eye to the great promises in the scriptures, both that we be not cheated with the empty pleasures here, nor cast down when we think of the numberless pains and sorrows that necessarily fall to our lot.

Infinite goodness draws good out of every thing. Our very passions and follies are sometimes of use to make us somewhat more regular than otherwise we would be; mutual fear makes us careful not to stir up one another's anger, and to prevent bodily harm; and the fear of censure and ill tongues is a considerable defence of our weak virtue. We would more frequently do ill, if we were not afraid that ill would be said of us. I grant this is not true virtue, nor can any thing be acceptable to God when it is only done upon worldly motives, and selfish considerations: however, it is so far good for us not to be wholly

wholly abandoned, or without shame; for we may chance to reflect afterwards, and find out the beauty of virtue and religion, which we could never do in a profligate course of life.

It is indeed very remarkable, that disappointments, trouble, fear, folly, every thing, should produce such happy effects! but it is most worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness, that our own faults should mend us, by making us humble; and that faults and imperfections in general should raise our hearts above this present world.

C H A P. VIII.

God's goodness to his creatures at all times.

ALL creatures feel the divine care and goodness; "He opens his hand, and they are filled with good*." That whole psalm is extraordinary moving.

* Psal. civ. 28.

Man.

Mankind may be said to be God's peculiar care : they are formed "after his image ;" and "his delights are to be with the children of men." So the scripture assures us.

In the state of innocence no pleasure was denied ; nothing was forbidden but the fruit of one tree ; and "perhaps before it was forbidden, mankind began to be too aspiring." We are likely to remain in darkness concerning those hidden things, and must stick to the plain history, that "our first parents fell." Their fault was the less heinous, that they were tempted by the devil, whose arrogance had made him fall before ; he said "he would be like the Most High *." This pride and folly of our enemy is inconceivable ; but St Jude tells us of angels "who kept not their first estate," and their arrogance must have thrust them down. It cannot be otherwise (we may well think) in the nature of things.

Certainly man has very little reason

* Isa. xiv. 14.

to be proud; and yet sometimes he is said to be as proud as *Lucifer*!

But to humble this pride of man, it pleased God to subject him to all the miseries of body and soul, which we have hitherto mentioned, and can never be enough sensible of. After our Saviour's atonement for us, if we were free of pride and other vices, (though pride is the most criminal), our recovery would come of course.

I shall not say there is any man that equals himself with God; but still it is arrogance if he does not give God the glory of any gifts he has received from him; and it is great folly to think he has received more than he hath, which is very often our case.

But the goodness of God follows us at all times: he gives us good things to enjoy, and mixes bitter things with them, that we may not be intoxicated or drunk with pleasure; and to raise us out of our lethargy, he sometimes inflicts the severest chastisements.

God hath moreover given to man-
kind

kind, at several times, exprefs manifestations of his will, to the end they might mend their lives, and escape his wrath. Thus he warned the old world by *Noah*, and thus he declared himself to *Abraham* against *Sodom* and *Gemorrhah*, and in like manner to *Jonas* against *Nineveh*; with many other instances.

But, which is more remarkable, when the light of nature was almost extinguished, and the most abominable things done by men, God was pleased to give exprefs laws in writing to a whole nation; by whose example the rest of the world might be reformed; especially when they considered how much God had done, and what wonders he had wrought for that people. Let us think of the plagues of *Egypt*, the passage through the *Red sea*, the journeying in the wilderness, the *manna*, or food from heaven, the water out of the rock, the entry into the promised land, and miraculous victories over the inhabitants; let us consider these things, and

particularly the giving of the law with thunder and lightning, and the shaking of the mount, and we shall find the greatest manifestations of the divine power that we can imagine.

Let us also consider all the chastisements of that people, upon their frequent falling into idolatry and wickedness, their deliverances from their enemies, new crimes, and new slavery, many things foretold by the prophets, and the exact fulfilling of them; is not all this enough to convince us of the great stupidity and perverseness of human nature, and of God's infinite mercy and long-suffering?

But nothing comes up to our Saviour's taking our nature upon him, and doing and suffering for us what he did. He came in the *fulness of time*, the time that was fixed for his coming, and marked by the prophet *Daniel* *.

The law of *Moses* was not able to make "the observers of it perfect†," as the apostle tells the *Hebrews* very

* Dan. ix. 24.

† Heb. x. 1.

plainly.

plainly. It was good for the purposes that God designed it, and no more was required but the faithful observance of it while it stood. And many pious and wonderful men were found among the *Jews* before our Saviour came into the world; yea, before the law of *Moses* holy persons were found, as *Abraham*, and others descended of him; and holy men are found even before the flood, for instance *Enoch*, who walked with God, and *Noah* himself; which shews that in all periods of the world there have been righteous persons, and consequently accepted of God.

But as wickedness increased, new methods were fallen upon by the wisdom of God, who gave *precept upon precept, and spoke at divers times and in sundry manners*. But the completest instruction of all was reserved to the blessed *Jesus*.

C H A P. IX.

Some precepts and truths in the Christian religion.

OUR Saviour hath taught us truths which we could not have known without his light, and duties which we cannot perform without his assistance; but he has promised his assistance to all who sincerely ask it. The first duty that may occur to us is prayer, on account of our wants and our dangers. The heart may be said to have a way of speaking to God without words, "with groans that cannot be uttered;" but when words are to be used, what can be so fit as those our Saviour himself condescended to teach? The mind indeed must be in a right disposition, otherwise all words and desires are in vain. "Ye ask, and have not," says the apostle *, "because ye ask amiss." For which reason I mention the asking sincerely, that is,

* James iv. 3.

with a design of pleasing God, as well as for any benefit to ourselves; or rather, we should seek to please God in the first place: this we should have at heart, when we say, "Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done," &c.

That prayer commonly called the *Lord's prayer*, ought to be well considered; it shews us our greatness, in having God for our father; it shews us our wants, when we pray for *our daily bread*; and our dangers, when we pray to be *delivered from evil*: it shews us the measure of forgiving others, namely, as we would wish to be *forgiven* ourselves: it shews us (if I may speak so) how we ought to enter into the interests of God, when we pray that *his kingdom may come*; and how perfectly our own will ought to be resigned, when we pray that *his will may be done*. I shall leave all the words of that most divine and perfect form of prayer to be considered in their proper order.

If we would give attention, we should see in how small compass our

chief duties lie, with many truths of the greatest consequence.

Praise and thanksgiving are also found in that same complete form of prayer, and they are duties we are highly obliged to perform : *Be thankful unto him, and speak good of his name.* Praise is a chearful thing ; the mind could have no entertainment so pleasant : prayer is a relief to the mind in trouble ; praise is a delight to it in prosperity.

Public praise and prayer stir up the mind, and awaken it from its slumber ; for we are asleep as to heavenly things, and our thoughts are often wandering in the midst of our devotions ; but still public devotions are of great use.

Private praise and prayer may be performed almost without interruption, the lifting up of the heart may be so frequent ; and in those private devotions there is no fear of hypocrisy or ostentation.

Meditation is another kind of private devotion, in which the mind thinks

thinks of the power and wisdom of God, or any of his attributes : it considers the works of creation and providence ; and as these things cannot be considered without delight, meditation will naturally end in praise and thanksgiving ; and when we think on our own folly and corruption, together with the sad state of the earth, our meditation will naturally end in prayer. It is impossible for those who are taken up with the low pursuits of the world, and who never pray but for form's sake, to comprehend what delight others may have, who pray from another spirit ; nor what discoveries it may please God to make unto them.

All the Christian virtues are inseparably linked together ; but humility is a principal one, and without it prayer would not be acceptable, nor any thing that we could perform. Humility has been called " the altar " on which God would have us offer " our sacrifices : " and this justly ; for what can the worship of the proud signify,

signify, whose end in all their actions is their own glory rather than God's.

The good effects of humility, and the bad effects of pride, are both seen in that excellent hymn of the *Virgin Mary*, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek," &c.

We are taught to pray, that "God's kingdom may come;" not only his glorious reign in the next world, which will come in his appointed time, but also that he may reign in the soul during the present life; and this can only be in the soul that is humble; for "God resisteth the proud."

Nor can our prayers be of any use to us, unless we deny ourselves, and follow the example of our blessed Saviour. If we pretend to pray, without abstaining from what our conscience tells us we ought to abstain, we do not "lift up pure hands."

Let us run over in our minds the other duties and truths of Christianity, and this will help to give us a clearer

clearer view of that heavenly religion than generally we have.

C H A P. X.

The manners of the present Christians compared with the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

THIS comparison is extreme melancholy. We see in the Acts of the Apostles how great marks of love the primitive Christians expressed to one another, and to the whole earth. They lived according to the doctrine of their blessed master; and we cannot too often think of that doctrine of universal love, and of all virtues.

Nor should we ever forget our Saviour's example, since example often goes farther than precept. He lived poor, we are eager to be rich: this is enough to shew how his example is followed at present.

But we ought particularly to remember his manner of life before he entered upon his ministry: He lived
thirty

thirty years in an obscure and poor employment; he shewed himself only to the world "to obey the will of him that sent him;" and to do good to mankind; he still continued in his poverty, having no where to lay his head; and submitted to the cruelest affronts, and the severest death.

Many Christians at first imitated their great master; they did not rush into employments, they were content with food and raiment, and patiently endured hunger and thirst, and the greatest poverty, contempt, imprisonment, scourging, and death itself.

When their numbers increased, they were still more persecuted; and it is almost incredible what they endured for the name of *Christ*, under the persecuting Emperors, for the space of three hundred years. Shall I ask, how many would suffer martyrdom in this age?

Nothing would be more useful than to have our Saviour's words frequently in our mind, and to put

the question to ourselves, How do we observe them? For instance: Jesus Christ says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Do not we lay up as much as we can, and still covet more? Most of our Saviour's precepts and counsels have a reason joined to them, that the treasures of the earth are liable to so many accidents, and the heavenly treasures to none. The same observation may be made of other of his blessed instructions.

Jesus Christ says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Do not we judge and condemn our neighbours, without hearing what they have to say for themselves? Is not the most of our conversation taken up in censuring and blaming, and putting hard constructions upon every body's actions? And as we censure others, so they censure us.

Jesus Christ says, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."

Arc

Are not our expressions very often full of insolence and contempt? And they would be so more frequently, if we were not afraid of worse treatment from others; for the danger of hell is little minded.

Not only the sermon on the mount should be considered, but the whole strain of our Saviour's doctrine, with which we may compare our own behaviour.

Jesus Christ bids us "be humble:" Are not we extravagantly proud? He bids us "take the lowest place:" Are we not still aiming at the highest? He bids us "be meek:" Are we not stubborn and passionate? At the same rate, we may go through all our Saviour's instructions, and the instructions of his apostles, and compare them with the practice of the professors of Christianity at this time.

It will perhaps be said, that Christians have been very corrupt at all times. The thing is too true: even in the apostles days there were corruptions both in doctrine and practice.

Ch. XI

tice: pride gives rise to contentions and heresies. But after the persecutions ceased, the corruptions grew excessive: when the church was in riches and splendor, a door was opened to competition and envy; and luxury increased among all ranks.

To preach up poverty, and live in pomp, is very unsuitable. But let the doctrine of *Christ* be followed, and not the manners of men; and let those who blame others in different stations consider in their consciences, if they would not do the same things, were they in the same circumstances. And let it be considered in general, that the great decay of Christianity is chiefly owing to the neglect of that great duty of self-denial.

C H A P. XI.

Self-denial the foundation of most of the Christian duties.

Somewhat hath been said upon this head already. We must deny ourselves

selves if we would be the disciples of *Jesus Christ*. This truth cannot be too often repeated.

Faith is indeed supposed to go before all duties. We must have some faith even before we pray; and we must pray that we may get more faith.

We must pray also that we may be assisted in the great work of self-denial. If we continue to indulge ourselves in things wherein we know we ought to deny ourselves, our prayers cannot be heard upon any account; for our conscience gives us the lie.

We must consider with our own conscience what things we ought to deny ourselves in; for no man can lay down rules to his neighbour.

Every body knows he should abstain from gross sins, which is one kind of self-denial; but there are even some gross sins, which the force of custom makes people forget that they are sins, such as *drunkenness*, which St Paul numbereth among the abominable works of the flesh.

But

But self-denial in things that are not so gross is almost quite forgot. It is self-denial to restrain a passionate word ; but very few are at any pains with themselves in that point. The rude ignorant people curse their neighbours to their face, and rail and scold in a shameful manner ; and some who have had better education, fail prodigiously in the government of the tongue.

But it is not angry words only that are to be restrained, but whatever gratifies our own vanity, or our neighbours, though we are not so ready to err upon this last side : the most of our discourse drives at some respect for ourselves ; we seek to shew our skill and our wit in every thing ; sometimes we have a desire to be thought religious, and at other times we are ashamed to own religion ; just as the fancy takes us, or as we think it will raise our character with the present company.

Self-denial would suppress all these foolish and wicked motions, or at

least weaken them : for we must remember, that all sins come from the heart, or lie in the will ; our members only execute our vile purposes ; the hand that kills is not to blame, for the same hand may give alms ; as the same tongue that *cursets* may *blesse*.

If we could get the length of self-denial, the most of *our* work would be done, and God would do the rest : something we must do ; our conscience tells us so ; “ but it is God who “ worketh in us both to will and to do.” The sun shines first, but we must open our eyes to see the light : we must own that the very power of opening our eyes is from God ; but we dare not say that he refuses us this power.

We must resign ourselves, or give up our will and all we have to God ; and if we do this heartily, we shall soon be led to all the acts of self-denial that are fit for us.

We must acknowledge, to the honour of religion, that self-denial is only required upon our own account. God, who hath no pleasure in the death

death of a sinner, hath none in any affliction or uneasiness. To deny ourselves, is but to deny our corrupt nature, in its perverse appetites and imaginations. It is true, we must deny it even in its allowable desires, when the indulging them would interfere with our perfection.

We are in a fallen corrupted state. It is now necessary for us to deny our own wills, to stifle our irregular passions and appetites, as far as we are able. We must subdue our vanity, and our excessive desire of esteem.

We are surrounded with temptations of all kinds; we must therefore keep a continual watch over our actions, our words, and our very thoughts. All this is self-denial; for we are forward and prone to all evil and folly: we can hardly be in a place where drink is going, without being drunk; we can hardly open our mouth to speak, without speaking unfavourably of our neighbours, or too favourably of ourselves; if not sounding our own praises directly, at

least falling upon contrivances to make others praise us.

It were endless to mention all our defects, and consequently all the acts of self-denial which we should practise upon every occasion. We must examine ourselves, and see what vices we are most inclined to, or "the weights which so easily beset us," as the apostle says, and pray to God that he may remove them.

There is one thing always to be kept in mind, that if we do not deny ourselves, by checking the first motions of vice, they grow too strong for us to resist, and one vicious act makes way for another, till at last there is a settled habit, and we are tied and bound with chains of our own making. Let us consider this carefully, from the melancholy instances we may have felt in ourselves, and heard of in others.

Here somewhat ought to be said concerning the cross, as being the particular badge of Christianity. Our Saviour bids us "take up our cross;"

for

make for it is laid upon all men, and the taking it up implieth a chearful submission to it.

The cross must be bitter to us, or it would be no cross; and God, who knoweth best what is necessary for our cure, layeth such crosses upon us as his divine wisdom sees fit for that purpose. There are crosses to bear every hour of the day; whatever contradicts our humour is a cross, whether the contradiction is reasonable or not. Different tempers must cross and mortify one another, which doth good on both sides: even well-intentioned people may crucify one another, through their remains of imperfection; and their reflecting afterwards upon their error is a new cross to themselves.

Bodily pain, and loss of goods and reputation, are crosses that God lays upon us. Persons advanced in the spiritual life speak of crosses laid on more immediately by his divine hand, which are still harder to bear, as tending to a more inward purification.

CHAP.

C H A P. XII.

Of Equity and Compassion.

THE great duty of self-denial, mentioned in the former chapter, would make other duties follow of course, if it were faithfully practised. If the ill humours were out of the body, health would be restored immediately.

Man was made upright, and some sense of equity still remains in him, as also some compassion and tenderness for others.

Equity, or justice, in the highest signification, implies all the duties we owe, even those we owe to God. It is just that we should praise and love him, because he is infinitely lovely and praise-worthy. But we shall first consider justice only as it relates to men.

Our blessed Saviour gives us the measure or standard of justice or equity: "Therefore all things whatsoever

“ soever ye would that men should do
“ to you, do ye even so to them.” He
adds, “ For this is the law and the pro-
“ phets,” It is all that is required in
the law and the prophets, with regard
to our neighbour. The love of God
is indeed the “ fulfilling of the law ;”
but if “ we do not love our neigh-
“ bour whom we have seen, we can-
“ not love God, whom we have not
“ seen.” So the apostle tells us. And
it is remarkable, that the words of the
scripture have a plainness and force in
them, which men very often obscure
and weaken by their explications.

The happy effects of justice may
be imagined, by considering the un-
happy effects of injustice. The earth
is covered with war and bloodshed ;
groans and tears are the effects of in-
justice, even in private persons.

Justice implies compassion. We
are naturally dear to ourselves. If
we were just, our neighbours would
be dear to us in like manner.

It is but a poor kind of justice that
only abstains from doing injury. We
ought

ought to support and relieve others as we see them in difficulties, since we would wish to be supported and relieved ourselves: and it would not deserve the name of compassion, to pass by a person in distress, (though we might feel some pity for him), if we give him no manner of assistance. The *tender-hearted Samaritan* is a noble character.

Hard-heartedness will soon turn into oppression, and oppression into cruelty. How many little oppressions are people guilty of, which are very grievous to the sufferers! A bitter word, a contemptuous look, with many other instances of ill humour, and saucy behaviour; such things happen among equals.

But how many instances of severity in the higher ranks against the lower! the rich oppress the poor. I do not mean those who have not the necessities of life, but those who are some degrees poorer than themselves. What vexatious law-suits! what impositions and fines! landlords op-
press

press the farmers, and the farmers oppress any that depend upon them.

Nor are the lowest ranks to be vindicated ; for they are troublesome very often. Servants are stubborn and unfaithful, and sometimes as saucy as their masters.

Oppression is too often found among the nearest relations, " Husband bands bitter against their wives," &c. I confess all these cannot be called little oppressions ; they are very severe, and discover the want of a tender heart.

It can never be enough considered how Christianity is so eminent for that blessed virtue of compassion, I ought to have called it *brotherly love*, even love to mankind. Christianity requires us to love our enemies. Alas ! how far are we from that practice !

To return to justice, equity, righteousness, integrity, which are all words for the same thing : The face of the world would be soon altered if righteousness took place. But this
happy

happy change we are hardly to expect here. Let us however do the best we can for our own part, and “look for
“new heavens and a new earth,
“wherein dwelleth righteousness*.”

St *Paul* tells us, after our Saviour, that “all the law is fulfilled in one
“word, even in this, Thou shalt love
“thy neighbour as thy self†.” And after he had mentioned the works of the flesh in the same chapter, he says,
“But the fruit of the Spirit is love,
“joy, peace, long-suffering, gentle-
“ness, goodness, faith, meekness,
“temperance; against such there is
“no law.”

C H A P. XIII.

Of Charity.

THis divine virtue often passeth on-
ly for *giving of alms*, or any good
that is done to men: but what St
Paul understands chiefly by it is the
love of God. The word *charity* sig-

* 1 Peter iii. 13.

† Gal. v. 14.

nifies *love*; and this divine virtue is the chief and mother of all virtues; it implies the purest adoration of the supreme being, and the fullest surrender of all the powers of our soul: in short it may be called a principle regulating all our actions and motions. To be convinced of the apostle's meaning, we need but look at the description and the marks he gives of it to the *Corinthians*. "Though I speak
 "with the tongues of men and an-
 "gels, and have not charity, I am
 "become as sounding brass, or a
 "tinkling cymbal. And though I
 "have all faith, so that I could re-
 "move mountains, and have not cha-
 "rity, I am nothing *." The love of our neighbour is certainly included in the apostle's description; for "cha-
 "rity is kind."

Let the whole chapter be read. The apostle proceeds to give the marks of charity, which cannot agree so well to any thing as to the love of God, though there are things in the

* 1 Cor. xiii.

description of it that agree likewise to the love of our neighbour: but charity is "that which is perfect." And the apostle concludes, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

Reason itself may teach us that the love of God is the greatest of all duties, and that they must all be comprehended in it. In our imperfect love of any person, we do all we can to please and shew our esteem, and are ready to obey all the commands and to do the will of the beloved person. How much more reasonable is it to do the will of our blessed Maker, and "to love him with our whole heart, strength, and mind!" He is the fountain of all goodness and beauty: we would love him for his own excellencies, if our hearts were in good order; and all we can do in the mean time is to give up our hearts wholly to him, that he may cleanse and purify them, and enlight-
en

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en our minds, that we may see his divine perfections in the true light.

We must pray for the assistance and grace of God, that we may be enabled to do what we cannot do by nature, or of ourselves. We must pray, that he would root out every thing in us that hinders us from loving him with all the powers and faculties of our soul.

We have no notion of the deep corruption that hinders us from loving God: "We cannot serve two masters;" we love the world, and the things in it, and these chiefly for the love we bear to ourselves: so that it is this hateful *self-love*, or selfishness, that makes us forget God, and care for nothing but what pleases us for the present time, or serves our present interest, or rather our humour; for our friends become our enemies, how soon they cross our inclinations, even though they do it for our good.

Thus are we blinded by *self-love*, which is the idol we set up in the
F 2 place

place of God. The Heathens, who worship stocks and stones ignorantly, are not so much to blame, as we who worship ourselves, and would have every body fall down before us.

But it is only the power of God that can break this idol to pieces. It is not in our power to free ourselves of our arrogance and folly. Any good thing we do is ready to make us value ourselves upon it, and so we grow more proud. If we do not *give alms* with a design *that we may be seen of men*, at least the reflection is apt to come in our heads that men will praise us; and we have often too much complacency in that reflection.

But often we perform our poor works with an exprefs intention that men may praise us; and we endeavour to come off as cheap as we can: Going to church is but a small matter; and we can meet with an acquaintance at the same time, or shew our best cloaths; and this we would have pass for devotion.

I am far from disparaging any religious

gious observance; we have need of many things to stir up our dull minds: but I wish people would examine themselves upon the motives of their actions, and see whether they are done for God's glory or their own.

What are we that we should rob God of his glory? *Dust and ashes* and sin. We may see the reasonableness of self-denial, though our Saviour had not recommended it: it is just with respect to God, and necessary upon our own account; for we must ascend to the love of God by those steps of prayer, self-denial, and all the other duties of religion.

I must say again, that common reason is enough to shew us, that God's glory ought to be the aim of all our actions; and that we ought to love him above all things, since he is the most perfect of all beings, and the author of all that is good; and that our heart must love something, and is only happy in loving what can satisfy it, which created things can

never do. All this, I say, reason may teach us imperfectly, but it is only the divine light that can teach us perfectly, and only the divine power that can draw us out of our *corruption* and *selfishness*, which are but two words for the same thing.

C H A P. XIV.

Of true Conversion.

MEN are very ready to fall into dangerous mistakes concerning this point, not considering that conversion is the turning from the love of pleasure to the love of God, from the flesh to the spirit, from unrighteousness to righteousness, or from any state which makes us disagreeable to God, to the contrary, which makes us acceptable to him.

It is indeed a comfort to think we are in such a church, or society, where we can have the best helps to religion, and where the doctrine of Jesus Christ is taught in the greatest purity.

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purity. But this is not all; we must consider seriously what the gospel requires of us; we must "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and to walk as our Redeemer hath directed us, and walked before us.

We flatter ourselves, if we think to be saved without following our Saviour's example. He says himself, "Except ye be converted, and be come as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*." Let us put our conversion and our reformation to that touchstone. Let us examine our consciences, and see how our behaviour agrees with that of our blessed master.

What can possess us to think we are *reformed* and *converted*, when we are still living in wickedness? God is too good to impose upon us; it were blasphemy to think it; if the devil deceiveth us, it seems we are willing to be deceived; and so upon the matter we deceive ourselves. The devil may tempt us, but he cannot

* Matth. xviii. 3.

force

force our will; nor can he so delude our understanding, as to make us take vice for virtue. God hath not given our adversary such absolute power over any of our faculties.

But we are at no pains to resist the devil, nor our own corrupt inclinations; and our pride makes us throw the blame of our misdeeds any where but upon ourselves: we blame the devil when we should not; yea, we are so void of shame and piety, as sometimes to blame the merciful and just God.

Let us not deceive ourselves, by thinking we are converted when we are not. To be converted, we must "be renewed in the spirit of our mind*," as the apostle tells us. The going from one party to another, is no more *conversion* nor *reformation*, than the going from one town to another.

Conversion is the drawing near to God with the heart. He complained of the Jews, that "they drew near to him with their mouth,

* Eph. iv. 23.

" and

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“ and honoured him with their lips,
“ when their heart was far from
“ him *.” See also the first chapter
of that prophet, wherein their sacri-
fices are called *vain oblations*, and all
their outward observances are despi-
sed, though they were of God’s ex-
press appointment, and not of man’s :
but the heart having no share in those
things, they became an *abomination*.

What delusion is it to call ourselves
the *elect*, the *godly*, the *reformed*, the *re-*
generate, the *true church*, or any title
that men take to themselves, without
having the spirit of Jesus Christ ? It is
uneasy to mention such plain truths,
and sometimes they are very unwel-
come ; but the delusion is excessive.
If, on the other hand, people assume
such titles, only to get dominion over
others, no words can express such
impudence and profanation.

True conversion (I must say it once
more) is from the *natural* man to
the *spiritual*, from the life of *Adam*
to the life of *Christ*, from the love of

* Isa. xxix. 13.

ourselves to the love of God, from sin to righteousness; in a word, from such states as the scripture condemneth, to such states as it approveth: for as it cannot be said, that a diseased body recovers health only by changing its cloaths, so neither is the health of the soul restored by the mere change of forms and professions.

I beg leave to make a distinction betwixt true conversion and perfect conversion. Perfect conversion is that state wherein "we live no more," (as St Paul expresseth it) "but *Christ* liveth in us:" and we cannot conceive what we must undergo before we arrive at this blessed state.

True conversion may be said to happen, when our hearts are touched with a sincere desire of forsaking our own will, in order to do the will of our heavenly Father. This may be called real, or true conversion; for the bare change from one outward form to another is but a false or sham conversion.

But true conversion may be attend-
ed

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ed with many imperfections. A man may have a right view of the end of his journey, or the place where he should arrive at, as also of the place from whence he should depart; he may have a hearty desire to leave the one, and to reach the other :

I say, we may begin our journey from this world to the heavenly *Jerusalem*, with a very sincere intention; but then we may be very often intangled with the things of this miserable world, the vain fruitless desire of pleasing men, and the silly fear of what they may say. We may be likewise hindered by our own violent passions, which may stop our journey like storms of wind or rain. We may be beat down to the ground, and plunged in the mire of vices; but as we fall, so we may get up again, and go on our journey the best we can; for we are never to despair of the help of God.

CHAP.

C H A P. XV.

Of the right Use of Time.

WE are here but a few days, till we must appear before the judgment seat of God, to give a strict account of all we have done in the body. Of this short time we cannot call a moment our own; we may die with the very word in our mouth. How great need therefore have we to employ our short and uncertain time to good purpose! It is a kind of stock put in our hands to purchase eternal happiness; and if we squander it away, we lose that happiness, and fall into unspeakable misery.

Sleep, and other necessities of our frail bodies, must take away a great part of our time from us: but for this we are not accountable, if we do not waste too much of it in relieving those necessities, or rather indulging our pleasures.

We must also labour in our several employ-

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As it is idleness that makes people fall upon foolish amusements and diversions, to pass away the time which hangs so heavy upon their hands, it were very reasonable for them to think how they might pass it better ; since if they ever reflect, especially on a dying bed, it will be very grievous to them, that they have spent their precious time so foolishly and unworthily. How will it torture them to look back upon their gaming and drinking, their obscene discourse, their common way of censuring their neighbours, in a word, all their trifling and sinful practices !

I shall not condemn every thing
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that is called diversion; a game at cards is better than drinking, or speaking ill without drinking. A man's own conscience and good advice must direct him for the best, or the least evil, in such cases; for it is to be acknowledged, that both body and mind have need of some relaxation.

The great body of mankind must work hard for their bread; it were good if they could mix some good thoughts with their labour; which they might do if they were wise, and it would very much sweeten their toil. They might meditate in the field upon God's goodness; pious reflections might rise when they plough and sow; and in their houses they might have many occasions of lifting up their hearts to God in short prayers and praises, without any body's knowing what passed in their minds.

Such secret devotions, or whatever they may be called, might be performed by all ranks: but they must pass very unobservedly, otherwise
pride

pride might mingle with them, and the company would look upon it as dreaming, or perhaps madness.

But we are not only to endeavour to spend our time well for our own improvement in devotion; we must likewise endeavour to spend it for our neighbour's good; and so we must seek all occasions of relieving the poor and distressed that properly fall to our share, for prudence must still go along; at least we must omit no occasion that offereth to us of doing good any manner of way, either by money, or any other assistance.

We must neither forget our neighbours nor ourselves. We must not turn "keepers of others vineyards, and neglect our own." The constant intention of pleasing God would lead us right in every thing.

That happy intention is the *walking before God*. If we consider ourselves as still in his presence, (which undoubtedly we are), we shall employ our whole time in doing what we

ought; though still we must look upon ourselves as unprofitable servants.

One very happy way of passing time is in good conversation; nor can any thing be more agreeable. But here I suppose there is familiarity, else the discourse must only be upon common things: every one is on his guard, and afraid to talk of religion, lest it should be thought *cant*; which indeed is very much to be shunned.

But when true friends meet together, who have a relish for pious conversation, they may be very useful to one another; and they ought to lay aside reserve.

Religious assemblies, public and private prayers, good meditations when alone or in company, (for the mind is still going upon somewhat), all these things are very good for employing the time.

Reading books of instruction is what every body knows to be useful, and no books so useful as the holy scriptures.

C H A P. XVI.

An Exhortation to the Study of the Scriptures.

What pity is it that such a present from heaven should be so shamefully neglected! The scriptures are the word of God, and the manifestation of his will to the children of men: How carefully ought we to study them, both from our interest and our duty! What study could be so pleasant, if we had any taste? The writings of the Old and New Testament excel all other writings, in the plainness and nobleness of the style, beside the greatness of the truths they discover. How important are these truths, on which our happiness or misery depend for ever! Yet God speaketh, and men will not hear! "Fools hate instruction. We love darkness better than light, because our deeds are evil."

A little was said before concerning

the truths which holy writ teacheth us. It shews us what man was once; what we are now, through the fault of our first parents; and what we may be through the merits of Jesus Christ, if our own fault is not a hinderance.

The people of *Berea* are commended in the Acts of the Apostles, for their diligence in searching the scriptures: and they had only the books of the Old Testament in their hands. Much more ought the scriptures to be studied now, since the books of the New Testament are added.

Both Testaments may be compared together. Our Saviour's coming into the world, and all his miracles and sufferings, are prophesied in the Old Testament; and he appealeth to it in his arguing with the *Jews*, some of whom believed in him, and others rejected him, because they expected a deliverer who should make them great in this world. Temporal greatness is a bewitching thing.

The state of the *Jews* at this time
is

is melancholy : it was foretold also ; and there are many prophecies concerning their conversion. - It will still come : " A thousand years in God's " fight are but as one day."

The Old Testament contains the history of that remarkable nation. It begins indeed with the history of the world. What strange events ! The creation, the fall, the flood, the Red sea, the law, the promised land ; in a word, all the extraordinary affairs of that people, from *Abraham* to the captivity, and some things which befel them from that time to the birth of our Saviour, including two and forty generations, as *St Matthew* informeth us.

The New Testament contains our Saviour's life, his doctrine and miracles, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and ascension ; the beginnings of the Christian church, the labours and miracles of the apostles, their instruction to the faithful in their epistles ; and, lastly, the revelation of *St John* ; for the true explanation

tion of which men must wait till God's appointed time.

It must be remembered, that in the books of both Testaments there are more meanings than the literal. St *Paul* speaking of *Abraham's* two sons, the one by *Sarah*, and the other by the *bond-woman*, addeth, "Which things are an allegory."

Some of those figures are applicable to the next world, which is called the *New Jerusalem*: others of them are applicable to the spiritual state of the soul; as outward circumcision is a figure of the circumcision of the heart; the *Canaanites*, a figure of our unlawful desires and passions; with a thousand things besides, which have a relation to moral actions, and the inward life, though the outward literal meaning is never to be laid aside, unless the expressions are only figurative, as when God is said to have hands and feet, anger, derision, &c. Let this be considered, and perhaps it will not be found a bad key for understanding several passages of holy

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holy writ, which would be of great use for the true reformation of our lives.

When one considers all the beauties and advantages of these sacred books, the historical part, the religious ordinances, (even under the law), the pure doctrine, the well-attested miracles, the fine compositions of poetry, the prophecies, and their accomplishment, and above all, the life and offices of our blessed Redeemer; I say, when one considers all these things, he must be astonished at the impiety of despising and ridiculing what is so divine in itself, and advantageous to mortals!

But such strange spirits there are; though perhaps they are led by a spirit more cunning than their own, whose interest they are carrying on without any express covenant with him.

Whatever may be of that, it is among the higher ranks that such impiety is most heard of: the great body of the people have a respect for the

the word of God; they have less pride, and sounder judgment, than the "scoffers, who walk after their "own lusts," as the apostle expresseth it.

At the same time it must be owned, that the great body of the people are very ignorant of the design and meaning of the scriptures in many cases. It is pity to see how they fall to work with the Bible: they take it up at random, and sometimes read a passage of the Levitical law with the same grave tone as if it were a part of *Christ's* sermon on the mount.

In this point the judgment of the people is not to be made speeches on; but it proceeds much from inadvertency: and since their intention is good, any little endeavours for their better information ought cheerfully to be given, expecting from the Holy Spirit alone the fruit of any endeavours, and true light only from that Spirit both to others and ourselves.

I have often thought it would not be an ill method for those who have Bibles,

Bibles, and can write, to make some extracts out of them concerning the most remarkable vices and virtues. For example, to take pride, and so collect some texts concerning the danger and abomination of it. Sometimes the same verse will contain both the vice, and the virtue opposite to it *.

As to pride: "When pride cometh, then cometh shame." "Pride goeth before destruction." "A man's pride shall bring him low." "Only by pride cometh contention." "Wo to the crown of pride." "A proud heart will not I suffer." "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect to the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off." "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." St *Peter* had said immediately before, "Be ye all subject one to another, and clothed with humility."

* There is somewhat of this kind done by Dr *Gastrel*; but it need not hinder people from making extracts for themselves, provided they can make them with discretion.

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The like extracts might be made upon other subjects; against lying and deceit, against gluttony and drunkenness, against sloth, against anger, against hypocrisy, against oppression, against evil-speaking of all kinds; in short, against every thing that is offensive to religion and good manners.

And as the *Canaanites* were driven out of the Holy Land before the children of *Israel* got possession of it, so vices are rooted out of the soul before the planting of virtues. And the like extracts might be made as to these:

On righteousness, on temperance, on mercifulness, on the fear and love of God; which last is all in all.

Extracts might also be made concerning the miseries of the present life, and the hopes of a better: on death and judgment; or any subject which the well-disposed Christian had a mind to consider with a particular attention.

C H A P. XVII.

The Necessity of Discretion, Watchfulness, and Prayer.

THE conclusion of a former chapter suggested a reflection, that in practising certain virtues, and shunning certain vices, we run some hazard of falling into extremes : for the common saying is here very true, That virtue lieth in the middle.

There are some vices so absolutely wicked and base, that we cannot keep at too great a distance from them ; such as pride, envy, malice, and many more. There are some virtues so necessary and charming, that we can never have too much of them ; such as sincerity, humility, and the like.

There are lesser virtues, such as liberality, that must be practised with discretion : for if a man should give too much to one that happened to ask first, he might put himself out of a capacity of assisting another person

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of

of more worth and necessity, that might come afterwards. Indeed our blessed Saviour bids us in general “Give to him that asketh; and from him that would borrow, not to turn away.” His divine wisdom did not see it necessary to make any restrictions, since nature is too ready to seek excuses and dispensations from its duty.

But we are not so ready to err upon the *giving side*; only we are to guard against too much easiness of temper, which would make us a prey to every importunate, or every unjust person.

Discretion must go along with our actions; the prudence of the serpent must be joined with the simplicity of the dove: our Lord himself recommends it, and often bids us “beware of men.”

Nor is it less necessary we should *beware of ourselves*, since we are our own greatest enemies; for which reason, the duty of self-examination is often recommended: but then we must

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must take care not to go to an excess in making too many reflections upon our own conduct ; which would make us fall into foolish scruples, and put a stop to all good actions ; it might even turn our heads, and make us distrust the mercy of God. I grant the scrupulous state is not so ordinary as carelessness and impiety : but all extremes are to be shunned.

It is certain that vices can never turn virtues ; but there are virtues that may turn vices, by pushing them too far. Cheerfulness is a virtue ; but when it passes certain bounds, it is folly and insolence.

Diligence is a virtue ; but it may turn to hurry, precipitation, and anxiety of mind. Reproof is a virtue ; but it may turn to chiding and scolding.

Thus many good things may degenerate : frugality may become sordid ; decent living, fantastical. We may be too coarse, or too fine, in our apparel ; too nasty, or too nice : in

our behaviour, too formal, or too rough.

We must still guard against doing too little or too much. *Solomon* speaks of an excess in righteousness itself. We must not expect too much from imperfect creatures: and there are several things which discretion must make us wink at. It is very true, our Saviour bids us "fulfil all righteousness:" but moderation, and bearing with one another, is a part of righteousness; so that *Solomon* seems only to have cautioned against too rigid exactness.

But who is sufficient for these things? We are surrounded with dangers upon all sides: if we escape rocks, we are ready to fall into quicksands. We have bad example without us; and within we have our own passions, and pride, that still aims to be admired in every thing we do or omit.

We must therefore be constantly upon the watch, according to our Saviour's

Saviour's direction; for we are placed *between fire and water.*

We must watch, and use our utmost endeavours in every thing; but at the same time we must remember, with *David*, that "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Without his assistance and grace, our prudence is but *folly*, and our best actions *sin*.

This shews clearly the necessity of prayer. We can never reflect enough on our passions, our frailty, and our inconstancy: we have the passion and folly of *the day* to struggle with; we are not the same persons in the forenoon and afternoon; we complain of being engaged with madmen, and forget that we are mad ourselves.

How many things have we to pray for! how many things to pray against! The choice ought certainly to be referred to the "fountain of all wisdom, that knoweth our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking." This some of the wiser Heathens were sensible of.

Somewhat was said on prayer before ; and on the most excellent form appointed by our Saviour. “ Thy “ will be done,” is the most perfect of all petitions. I do not say that the heart may not *pour itself out* according as it finds itself moved : but we always pray best when we come disposed to do the will of God in every thing.

Nor do I say, that we must be always on our knees when we pray : the offering up the heart, in whatever posture, is true prayer : and though our attention must frequently be drawn off from God, because of the things we are necessarily employed in ; yet our heart may be in such a fixed and settled state, as that the common actions of life may be said to be done but by accident ; or even any actions, proceeding from such a frame of heart, may be said to be done “ to “ the glory of God,” as St Paul expresseth it.

This is the most material service of God ; this is to honour him perpetually.

tually. Our thoughts are ordinarily scattered and distracted with an infinite number of things that we have nothing to do with : such a frame of heart would gather them in, (which is called *recollection*), and would free us of a world of trouble, created by our wandering imaginations, and our violent passions.

This state may be termed continual prayer ; it doth not hinder proper action, but rather makes it more vigorous, by freeing it from impertinent clogs.

Our pride and fancy allow us no peace nor quiet, and our passions are our executioners ; we are tortured with imaginary affronts and injuries, when none are intended us.

From all which evils a heart resigned to God, and only intent upon pleasing him, would fully deliver us. His providence would be enough for us ; we should live without anxiety and hurry ; our time would be sufficient for our business, and we should not be a burden upon ourselves : no
more

more suspicions; quarrels would cease; "Envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness," would be far removed from us.

Such a frame of heart would make our moments pass in an unspeakable tranquillity; all impatience, weariness, and disgust, would be cut off; we should then be in the state of children, but without their folly; our life would be attended with spiritual comfort, even in the midst of tribulations, and our death would be "the death of the righteous."

C H A P. XVIII.

Of the Difference between the Jewish Religion and the Christian.

THese two religions can only be compared together properly, or with fitness; because they only are of divine institution, and outwardly revealed from heaven. The Heathen worship was unhappy, as being the inventions of corrupt men; and probably

bably with great mixture from the powers of darkness; their rites and ceremonies were so stupid, so impure, so cruel.

Mahomet's revelations were but pretended; so the *Turkish* religion is a mass of wild fictions, an absurd mixture of *Paganism*, *Judaism*, and *Christianity*. Many parts of the earth are still over-run with gross idolatry of various sorts.

Before the law of *Moses*, or the *Jewish* religion, we hear of no outward institutions from God. Sacrifices indeed were in use since the beginning of the world, as we see in the instance of *Cain* and *Abel*. But during all the time before the flood, and after it, till the giving of the law from Mount *Sinai*, mankind were left to the natural dictates of conscience, or what is called *natural religion*, and sometimes *the patriarchal dispensation*.

Before the flood the scripture tells us of some few men who lived plain, inoffensive, religious lives, as having God before their eyes in all their actions.

tions. It is said particularly of *Enoch*, that he walked with God, as was observed before. But as mankind multiplied, they became more corrupt, “and the earth was filled with violence;” which brought upon them the judgment of the flood.

The righteous *Noah*, (who was saved with his family), continued to give a good example, except once that we hear he was *drunken*. But the earth being again overspread with disorders and abominations, it pleased God to call *Abraham* from his country, and to institute circumcision: he worshipped the true God, and his descendents continued in his religion till the law of *Moses* was given; at which period ended the *patriarchal* dispensation.

Now, for understanding the difference between the *Jewish* and *Christian* religions, together with the value of each, it will be of great use to consider attentively those two great epistles, to the *Romans*, and the *Hebrews*. But we must understand beforehand, that the true *Jews* and the

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the true *Christians* had but one essential religion, which consisted in the love of God and our neighbour : for, as *St Paul* hath said, " He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, which is outwardly in the flesh," &c. This agrees with *Moses's* words to the *Jews*, (*Deut. x.*) " Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked," &c. He had said before, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," &c. Our Saviour confirms the matter, when he said to the doctor of the law that tempted him, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." We see then that love is the end of the law, and that *Jews* and *Christians* had but one religion.

In

In the two epistles above mention-
ed, the law of *Moses* gets its due, but
the *Gospel* is preferred, both for its
greater efficacy, and the higher cha-
racter of its lawgiver. *Jesus Christ* is
not only exalted above *Moses*, but a-
bove the angels: for when it is said,
“He was made a little lower than
“the angels*,” it is to be understood
as he was man; for he is “heir of
“all things, and maker of the
“worlds.” He says of himself, “The
“Father and I are one;” and *St John*
thus begins his gospel, “In the be-
“ginning was the Word, and the
“Word was with God, and the
“Word was God.”

Of *Moses* it is said, “He was faith-
“ful in all his house, as a servant,
“for the testimony of those things
“which were to be spoken after:”
but *Christ* “as a Son over his own
“house,” &c. He is also called
“the Mediator of a better covenant,
“which was established upon better
“promises.” Much more is to be

* Heb. ii. 7.

“found

found in the *Hebrews*, to shew the insufficiency of the *Jewish* law in comparison of the gospel; were it but this one verse, (chap. x.) "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."

In the *Romans* the law is sufficiently extolled; but many things are set down in that epistle to give the *Christian dispensation* the preference. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in *Christ Jesus*;" it is added, "to them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit *;" to teach us, that the bare profession and form of Christianity are not sufficient to save us, without the life and power of it, but will rather make our punishment the greater.

Indeed *St Paul's* great design is, to shew the excellency of faith above the works of the law. The *Jews* prided themselves that the law was committed to their keeping, and that they observed all the parts of it exact-

* Rom. viii. 1.

ly. The apostle undeceives them, and tells them plainly they were rejected; because they confided in their outward observances and privileges, and despised the rest of the world.

We must carefully remember, that the works of the law seemingly condemned by the apostle, and which God himself rejected, when they were not done from the spirit of religion, but from vile motives, or superficially at best; (for he says by the mouth of a prophet, "Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me*," &c.); I am bold to say, the works disregarded by St Paul were by no means the good works of humanity and love; for "without works faith is dead;" as, on the other hand, without faith no works of any kind could avail us. What *Jesus Christ* said in the case of marriage is applicable here, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder †."

But once more, as to the difference

* *Is. i. 13.*

† *Matth. xix. 6.*

between

between the *law* and the *gospel*, or the *Jewish* dispensation and the *Christian*, or the *Old Testament* and the *New*; we find, that the former dispensation was founded in fear, and with rigorous observances; whereas the latter was a dispensation of love, and no burdensome ceremonies required. It is true, we must “ deny ourselves, and take up the cross:” we must “ suffer with Christ, if we would reign with him:” this is properly the doctrine of the *New Testament*, wherein the corruption of our nature is more clearly discovered than in the *Old*. We may conclude too from reason, that the cross and sufferings are only laid upon us for our own good, to cleanse us from our impurity, as metals are purified in the fire. The merciful God hath declared, “ He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner* ;” nor is any chastisement inflicted, but for leading man back to his duty; which is a reason, not

* Ezek. xviii.

only for resignation and submission, but for thankfulness and love.

It is evident that the Christian law is much more a law of love than the *Jewish*, both with relation to God and our neighbour. For though the children of *Israel* were enjoined to love God with their whole heart, yet rewards (temporal rewards) were promised, to stir them up to that great duty; infinite goodness thus condescending to deal with his creatures according to the weakness and grossness of their state; since they cannot easily perceive, that to love God is the highest reward of itself, and the greatest happiness imaginable, or rather a happiness beyond all imagination.

But as the proper character of the *Jewish* law was fear, temporal punishments were also threatened; which was another argument of the gross state of the people. *Solomon* indeed hath said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" but "perfect love," saith *St John*, "cast-

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"eth out fear." This is not to be understood of *filial* fear, (the reverence of children to parents), which is distinguished from *slavish* fear, and will no doubt keep its place for ever. In short, St Paul calls the law a *state of bondage*, and the gospel a *state of liberty*.

With relation to our neighbour, the *gospel* is likewise much more a law of love than the *Jewish*; as easily appears from our Saviour's sermon on the *mount*, and the whole strain of the New Testament. It is true, he reproaches the *Jews* in these words, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition *;" with much more to that purpose; meaning their neglect of the *moral law*, when they punctually observed the *ceremonial part*. But still love was more insisted upon in the *new law*, and the Christians were at first as remarkable for their love to one another, as they are now for their hatred. It was a

* Matth. xv. 6.

strange instance of love, when “ the
 “ multitude of them that believed
 “ were of one heart and of one soul ;
 “ neither said any, that ought of the
 “ things he possessed was his own ;
 “ but they had all things common.”

As to the difference between the
 purity of manners required in the
new law and the *old*, let our Saviour’s
 doctrine be further considered. Our
 very thoughts are required to *be pure*.

The effects produced by the Chri-
 stian religion in its beginnings were
 suitable to the purity of the doctrine :
 All debauchery was at an end : The
 Christians were sober and temperate
 in every thing ; they bore with cheer-
 fulness the scorn and contempt of the
 Heathens, who indulged themselves
 in their excesses, and from contempt
 proceeded to hatred and cruelty ;
 which the true followers of the *cruci-
 fied Jesus* endured also with the ut-
 most constancy ! Men and women,
 the young and aged of both sexes,
 suffered a variety of exquisite tor-
 ments, rather than offer a little in-
 cense

cense to a Heathen idol! and they died praying for their persecutors and tormentors!

The rage of the Heathens is the less to be wondered at, because they saw their own condemnation and reproach in the innocent, regular, chaste, humble lives of the Christians. The decay of the Heathen ceremonies, the ridiculous and profane (obscene) inventions, all which "brought no small gain" to the priests, as well as pleasure to the observers, must have raised the indignation of all ranks and employments to the height of fury. It is even thought that the devil, whom our Saviour calls *the prince of this world*, governed mankind in an open manner, uttering his delusive false oracles, and making parents kill their children with their own hands, "souls destitute of help *." No wonder therefore if the Christian religion, which opposed all such worthless and abominable practices, was hated and persecuted

* Wisdom xii. 6.

by those who had an interest in keeping them up. To say no more of the great enemy of mankind, it is too natural for men themselves to oppress and destroy one another, upon the least interfering of their interests, yea, on the bare difference in opinion. It is to be remembered, however, that even in those times of gross ignorance and abomination, there were some men who lived commendably, and were "accepted of God;" as *St Paul* testifies, that "the Gentiles, who had not the law," (the written law of *Moses*), "did by nature the things contained in the law," (the works of justice and affection, and other virtues), and were therefore "a law unto themselves," &c. By which we may judge if we have any right to condemn all the Heathens.

It must indeed be owned, the Heathen world was in a very bad state (as it still is) without the light of the *gospel*: but the power of *Jesus Christ*, who raised the dead to life, added
this

this great miracle to the rest, in making his doctrine prevail over the greatest powers of the earth and hell, by the unlikeliest means imaginable to human reason. And how low soever Christianity may be at present, as to the practice, and its doctrine ridiculed by many who take its name, yet the same power that established it, will keep it from falling entirely :

" For he must reign till he hath put
" all his enemies under his feet. —

" And when all things shall be sub-
" dued unto him, then shall the Son
" also himself be subject unto him
" that put all things under him, that
" God may be all in all *."

* 1 Cor. xv. 25. 28.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

AS a multitude of books (of greater and smaller sizes) is still appearing on religious subjects, a man can hardly shun giving his approbation to some, and shewing his dislike to others ; though it may be supposed the authors on both sides have lost a great part of their intention, whether of doing good or evil. If any shall say, May not a man keep his approbation or dislike to himself? there is no doubt he may, and very often he ought ; but the question is, If he ought always? All the answer I can give is, that in a country where the permission of the superiors is not required, a man must judge for himself the best way he can, having the good of society always in view, at least that it suffer no harm from his meddling.

But as the few sheets (written several years ago) have very little I
can

can call mine in them, so the following scraps shall have still less ; that is, the very words, or words of the same meaning, shall be taken out of some books, pretty well known, and unexceptionable ; and from others equally unexceptionable, tho' less known. It seems all one, whether the authors are of the churches of *Rome* or *England*, of *Luther's* setting up, or *Calvin's*, nay, suppose them to be *Jews*, *Turks*, or *Heathens* ; truth being always truth, and *Jesus Christ* " the true " light, which lighteth every man " that cometh into the world." I shall therefore have nothing further to do, but to tack some truths together, which naturally belong to one subject, keeping always in view the first design, of being intelligible to the meanest reader, the meanest as to the world, but whose sincerity and attention may intitle him to the highest privileges.

The
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The Scriptures.

THESE sacred writings are allowed by all parties of Christians to be of divine authority, and consequently the rule or standard of faith and manners. When they are obscure, we must be content to find our curiosity put to a stand, and our pride mortified. Our duty is still plain; the love of God and our neighbour admits of no gloss nor restriction.

The church of *Rome* receives some books as *canonical*, or approved scripture, which Protestant churches reject, the authors being mostly unknown, and therefore called *apocryphal*, as well as reputed inferior in the point of authority, and even in sublimity. The church of *England*, however, appoints them to be read “for example of life, and instruction of manners*.”

The scripture teaches the true and

* Book of Common-prayer, 6th Article of Religion.

spiritual worship of God, as *Jesus Christ* said to the woman of *Samaria*, (*John iv.*) "God is a Spirit," &c. Those sacred writings have a surprising force in them: and herein lies the admirable difference betwixt them and the works of men; the scripture, under plain and common expressions, contains a strength and meaning wholly divine; whereas men generally fatigue themselves to find strong and elegant terms for expressing very weak things. O that people knew the benefit of reading the holy scriptures! It is surprising that any person should be hindered from making it his constant study, especially the New Testament! Should children be hindered from reading their father's will? Every body, on the contrary, should be taught to read it with the greatest attention, respect, and love.—This paragraph is from a Roman Catholic.

There was no written instruction during many ages after *Adam* was created; and even after his fall, the divine law (written in the heart) was

K

sufficient

sufficient for the faithful and sincere. This is called *the patriarchal dispensation*. But wickedness prevailed in the earth to such a height, that all the inhabitants (save eight persons) were swept away by the flood. We then hear of precepts given to the sons of *Noah*; but of nothing written, till the law of *Moses*; and that only to one nation: so the wisdom of God, the Father of mankind, thought fit; for "God is no respecter of persons." Prophets were sent to the *Jews* at different times, to reclaim them from idolatry, and all their vices, as well as to foretell the coming of the *Messiah*. The writings of the Old Testament are of various kinds, and not to be paralleled in sublimity and instruction but by those of the New. This is *the dispensation of the gospel*, to which nothing is to be added; our Saviour, by his doctrine and example, having finished all that was necessary to be made known to mankind.

The apostles wrote epistles to the Christian converts, to confirm them

in their faith, and to remove their mistakes, particularly concerning the *Jewish* law, which some Christians thought was still in force, with other errors in point of worship; not omitting to recommend the duties of social life, as between husbands and wives, parents and children, &c. With respect to the spiritual life, they had our Saviour's life for a foundation, which makes them insist so much upon being "united with God," "transformed into his image, loving him with the whole heart;" which is the great duty and happiness of men and angels. They insisted on the necessity of *self-denial*, a doctrine not current among the *Jews*, and less known to the *Heathens*, who had never heard of the fall. The scripture, in fine, has discovered many truths concerning the dignity and corruption of man, and the incomprehensible nature of the ever-blessed God.

The present state of Nature.

THIS is too large a subject to be attempted in few words ; yet there is the less occasion for many, or rather there would be occasion for none, if the scriptures were well considered : they inform us of the state of the earth before the fall, when there was no toil, no sorrow, nor disorder in man, either as to body or soul.

Ever since the fall, man is much in the same state, (the shortening of life after the flood is far from being a loss), born with the same appetites and passions, which he constantly studies to gratify, and by that means is said to "live to himself." Pride, covetousness, and sensuality, prevail much in the human composition, and man is oppressed by one or other of these task-masters by turns : then his imagination representing things to him in a false light, and giving him foolish notions of pleasure, interest, and glory, this makes his condition

yet

yet more restless and unhappy. We need not go far to find out the cause of wars, which make the earth desolate, even those parts of it inhabited by the professors of Christianity. St *James*, who puts the question, "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" makes answer himself by another question, "Come they not hence, even of your lusts?" *Lust* is another word both for desire and pleasure; so covetousness is called by St *John*, the *lust of the eyes*. We blame kings and princes for making *Europe* a field of blood; and no doubt they have the same passions and follies in common with the rest of mortals; but allowances ought to be made them, on account of their elevated stations, which naturally tend to make them giddy; to say nothing of their education, which is often very poor: and then we ought to consider them as besieged by those who commonly have nothing in view but their own ends, in

the advices they give their superiors in power and pageantry.

But we ought not to pore upon the disorders of persons in higher ranks, whether in the church or state. The great body of the people must pay taxes, and groan, without asking questions. Nor should the disorders of private life engage too much attention: it is but a melancholy business, and apt to lead us into a forgetfulness of our own personal disorders and vices, our self-conceit, and blindness of mind. Humility is enjoined to the meanest as well as to the greatest; and there is sometimes as much pride under coarse cloaths as in robes of state. We ought to look at home. The consequence of pride is to alienate men from one another, and from the spirit of religion; as humility promotes mutual love, and is the surest mark of true piety.

Human nature is not yet so corrupted, as to be without all sense of moral duties, and even some impression of those we owe our Maker:

but

but this impressi^{on}, or whatever it be called, is very faint and imperfect; and we are ready to satisfy ourselves with a chimerical religion, and with false hopes in the merits and redemption of *Christ*, when we have little or no desire of being renewed according to his Spirit. This is deceiving ourselves in the most deplorable manner. God is not mocked. Men even see through our disguises.

True humility, which has a loveliness in it to a well-disposed mind, does not consist in humble expressions, (which are very proper in the public prayers), but in a deep sense of our unworthiness in the sight of God, and in doing nothing to get praise from men. One great point of humility is, to yield our own will to that of others, when justice and good order suffer nothing by such condescension.

Conscience.

Conscience.

CONSCIENCE is a proof both of man's dignity and misery: it is the accuser, witness, and judge; and, unless true repentance take place, it is "the worm that dieth not." Figures are often the shortest way of conveying instruction: our Saviour made frequent use of them.

The works of God which we see with our bodily eyes, might make us conclude, that he is infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness: and we might conclude farther, that all praise and love belong to him of right. Thus far we might reflect with a certain joy; and nothing but our stupidity deprives us of it.

But, on the other hand, when conscience is awakened, and we get a sight of our faults, and discover but a little of our misery and corruption, we are scarce able to stand it; and the merciful God seems to be upon the managment with us, and to spare us, by discovering no more of our

OWN

own nature, or of his, than we can bear, and make a good use of.

Repentance.

AN awakened conscience must naturally produce sorrow and remorse, which are other words for repentance; but properly it signifies a *change of mind*, and a purpose of leading a new life. Fear and self-interest often stir first, and may go a good length in conversion; but a sense of justice, leading to the love of God, who is love, would go much farther, and prove a greater security for all duties. Preachers may think of it in their preaching and catechising, instead of insisting always upon terror.

True repentance and conversion are much the same; or the one may be considered as the beginning of the other; and conviction must go before both. Men must fly like criminals to *Jesus Christ*, who only waits for their repentance and humility to receive them into mercy.

When

When pride is removed, were it but for an hour, the soul is not only humble before God, but free from all haughtiness towards men, whom it loves as its brethren, and the images of God. When pride returns, the soul relapses into a state of anger, confusion, folly, and impiety. Repentance vanishes, till some new touch or stroke from the wise and merciful hand of Providence awaken the soul again out of its lethargy:—What passes after death we know not: but wisdom, abstracting from duty, leaves as little to that uncertainty as possible.

Things to be avoided. What to be kept in view.

HERE again the list must be imperfect, the number of things which are not counted *sinful*, being so very great. But then as they proceed from a corrupt principle, they are really sins themselves; for example, disputes about religion, or any subject a man enters upon to shew his skill and superiority,

riority, which commonly ends in putting both parties into a heat. Pride finds its account in such skirmishes.

On the other hand, there may be no less pride in an obstinate silence, when it comes from contempt, or the fear of discovering our own ignorance. Christian simplicity, and a modest opinion of ourselves, would direct us how to behave in company and conversation. To shun bad company, is a common, and a sure rule.

Melancholy is much to be avoided; for it may land in a distrust of the goodness of God, and be very troublesome to those we live with, even so far as to create a bitterness against them. The sour temper often turns to wrath, and is quite opposite to that state of joy recommended in holy writ: "God reigneth, let the earth be glad." "Rejoice in the Lord always," &c.

It is true, we are in a fallen state, and "the creation groaneth." But we are to call to our relief the promises of a happier world, "A new heaven

“ heaven and a new earth, wherein
 “ dwelleth righteousness.” And tho’
 every thing we hunt after in this life
 may be said to have delusion stamped
 upon it, yet there are things which
 may be called real satisfactions whilst
 they last. The pleasures of the low-
 est senses have a reality in them, and
 the pleasures of friendship are much
 superior. Persons, again, who have
 felt the pleasures of religion, do assure
 us they infinitely surpass all that can
 be conceived.

But the great number of things to
 be avoided, either as directly sinful,
 or leading to sin, may be judged of
 by looking at some of the instructions
 of the Apostles, here and there; as
 in these words of *St Peter*, “ Where-
 “ fore, laying aside all malice, and
 “ all guile, and hypocrisies, and en-
 “ vies, and evil-speaking, as new-
 “ born babes desire the sincere milk
 “ of the word, that ye may grow
 “ thereby *.” And in *St Paul’s*
 words to the *Ephesians*, “ Let all bit-

* 1 Pet. ii. 1. 2.

“ terness,

"terneys, and wrath, and anger, and
 "clamour, and evil-speaking, be put
 "away from you, with all malice *." See also the next chapter, towards the beginning. Here are but a few passages: many more will be found in the Old and New Testament, to teach us both what to shun, and what we ought to follow. Those who neglect to "search the scriptures," will find their error when it may be too late to retrieve it.

Our business in this life is, to do as sick people, who put themselves into the hands of a skilful physician, who will infallibly cure them, if they follow his directions, and take the medicines he prescribes. Abstinence from worldly pleasures and *fleshly lusts* is necessary in our distempered condition. Our Saviour has no need of our *self-denial*; he only enjoins the renouncing the things of this world, (rotten at best), that they may not foster our diseases, and deprive us of the heavenly joys he has prepared for

* Eph. iv. 31.

us. We are poisoned with self-love, and blind as to our true happiness, which he has put us in the way of obtaining, and given us his blessed example in order to it.

Afflictions are sent us purely for our own good, like sovereign remedies; and supposing them ever so terrible, they are soon at an end. Let us consider what *St Paul* says of the matter: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory *." He adds, as a necessary qualification, "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal."

These eternal things are the object of faith, which in another epistle is called "the evidence of things not seen †." It implies also trust in God, "(O ye of little faith!)," submission to his divine will in all things.

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. 18.

† Heb. xi. 1.

and a constant dependence upon it. *Faith*, in all its acceptations, "is the gift of God;" and "saving faith" is that only "which worketh by love*."

Attention to the voice of God.

"God is spirit;" therefore to imagine he has a voice like man were an absurdity. Many things are expressed in scripture by signs accommodated to our weakness and imperfection. This every body knows and admits. Thunder is called *the voice of God*.

Sometimes indeed the scripture makes mention of voices and words spoken to holy men and prophets: but this is supposed to be done by the ministry of angels: and such extraordinary communications are not to be desired; for it might proceed from a desire of being distinguished or exalted above the rest of mankind; and the reward of such pride might justly be delusion.

* Gal. v. 6.

The voice of God is addressed to the soul of every person, (what higher privilege can be imagined!), and nothing but want of attention hinders it from being heard and obeyed.

Sinners are required in scripture, "to return to their heart;" to "enter into themselves," and the like; which is the same with hearkening to the conscience. And hence it is that we find such mention of *the inner man*,—*the inward parts*,—*the hidden man of the heart*,—*the inward man*;—all which are but different expressions of the same thing, called by spiritual authors *the interior*, and sometimes *the centre of the soul**.

As to our want of attention, it comes from numberless sources: the pursuit of riches, pleasure, bare diversion, or amusement, to say nothing of fame or glory, all these are great hinderances to attention. It is true, the great body of the people

* This term is understood of the innermost part, or what is properly *divine* in man, and to which the eternal Spirit alone has access.

have fewer things to hunt after than those in higher stations; but every class of mortals, or rather every individual person, hath his pursuits and distractions, by which the mind is drawn off from the consideration of its duty and eternal happiness. The poorest have their projects and their diversions, and are as much given to shew and luxury (generally speaking) as they can afford.

It may be said, the number of distractions that hinder our attention is next to infinite. How many cares! how many passions! how many whims! and how many wild imaginations, which may be looked upon as a particular distemper, and to which those who are idle are the most liable! Some imaginations are ridiculous to the last degree, others are horrid. Honest labour, what a happiness it is! A wandering imagination is often a heavy cross.

Involuntary imaginations are not indeed criminal; they come into the head like the dreams of the night;

and it is not in the power of reason to thrust them out; or they return very soon to the attack. The criminal imaginations are such as rise from the corrupt inclinations, and may be said to have their root in the heart; they spring from the desire of sensual pleasure, or riches, or command, or praise; and by fostering these our desires, (especially that of praise and esteem), we take fancies of our own worth and excellency, and imagine we are admired when we are laughed at.

What shall deliver us from this state of folly, and slavery, and sin? Nothing but the sovereign power of God. It is true, we have the power of *asking*, and it is promised we shall *obtain*; but it is with the condition that we do not ask *amiss*.

To prayer we are to join watchfulness, which is the same with attention. We hear also of *recollection*, which signifies the *gathering in* the scattered affections of the heart, as well as our wandering imaginations, that our love may be fixed upon the
only

only object worthy thereof. If the heart were in good order, the head would grow wiser of course. Involuntary imaginations might contribute to humble our vanity.

One great error, which argues the bad state of our mind, and our folly, is our being in such a dread of censure; so that we may rather be said to give attention to the voice of men than to the voice of God! That this infirmity has its root in our pride is very plain.

But recollection being a thing so little understood by the generality of people, it may not be unnecessary to add a few lines more about it. Recollection, then, is that disposition we must be in for hearkening to God. He speaks to the heart, by giving it good inclinations or motions. He speaks to the understanding, by making discoveries of his divine nature, and the nature of man. Common reason may be called *the voice of God*. The beautiful order and productions of the creation strike us; and

and what we see and feel of the imperfect state of things, is a sort of speaking too, and designed to wean our hearts from earthly satisfactions. Great attention is necessary, that when we find our affections out of order, (which we may find in the beginning, when they are not too strong), we may strive to turn them away, and apply them to lawful objects. Reason would be of service to shew the emptiness and trouble of all worldly pursuits, which would be well supported by experience. But chiefly, if the love of God were kindled in the heart, it would consume all impurity, and put an end to all disorder.

If, after all the care we can take, and all the attention we can give, we find ourselves still haunted and persecuted by the involuntary imaginations already mentioned; the advice given by persons of experience in the spiritual life is, to condemn those impertinent intruders, like the buzzing of flies, and not to be discouraged by them, since nothing involuntary is
sinful.

sinful. No doubt we ought to abridge our diversions, and even our business, as much as possible, that so our heads may not be filled with the things we have been employed about, or new images raised by some connection with them, or (which is often the case) without any connection.

But that recollection is no less the business of the heart than of the head, (or rather, that it chiefly belongs to the heart), is evident from these words of *Solomon*, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." And by keeping the heart is not only meant being on our guard against our desires and appetites, but likewise against personal aversions, which would prevent all transports of anger; nay, the least approach of ill humour.

To do all our actions as in the presence of God, (from whom nothing is hid), and with the design of pleasing him, (which justice requires), is the best state the heart can be in; it is called *the presence of God*, as well as
recol.

recollection, the mind being *habitually* in a state of attention to the divine will. Nor is there any fear of negligence, or doing our work the wrong way; for we are not to let things drop out of our hands. Diligence and exactness is even a part of religion, when that principle takes place, (injoined by *St Paul*), "to do all things to the glory of God."

Such an attentive good disposition of soul also gets the name of *prayer*: for the command, *to pray always*, cannot be meant either of vocal prayer, or of meditation; and therefore is only to be understood of the internal frame of the heart, or *inward man*. Such a state in scripture is called *walking with God*.

Outward helps are by no means to be neglected. The public meetings of devotion are to be frequented, and at several times of the day (when necessary business can allow) a pious book may be looked at, were it but a few lines; and even in the fields, or within doors, at any labour, a petition

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tion may be put up, whether in words or silently, since God regards the heart only. A well-disposed heart or spirit can find a thousand ways of expressing itself to the Father of spirits, in prayers or praises, without study or restraint. The meanest of the works of nature, were it but a straw, is matter of adoration; and we have a large field for supplication, when we consider all our wants, and the hazards we run, especially that of forfeiting the happiness designed for us in the next life. As all the attributes of God are infinite, so is his condescension: he suffers children to speak to him, and delights in true simplicity.

But, as is said already, if all the care we can take is not sufficient to rid us of these pitiful imaginations, but that they plague us even in the time we set apart for prayer and retirement, we should bear them as the punishment of our past errors and vices, remaining united to God in heart and in will, which no power in
nature

naturè can force. By this conduct our distractions and absurd fancies blow over the sooner.

If it be asked, why people of all ranks, that are plunged in worldly business, either for necessary subsistence, or for gratifying their pride, and all their desires, complain so little of being disturbed with such foolish imaginations? the answer is, that the generality of the world seldom apply their mind to any thing but for their own pleasure in some form or other; and so they cannot be sensible of the imaginations that break in upon those few that set their affections *on things above*, and earnestly desire to please God. If such imaginations are cast in by the devil, (as it is commonly thought they are), he does not want to disturb the fancy whilst he is in possession of the heart; or if they are only the natural effect of our disorder since the fall, it may please God to let them tyrannize over us for our purification, and as an antidote to our pride. The blessed God wants not to disturb us,
much

much less to destroy us. Our happiness is his great aim; and in the order of things, purification must go before happiness; for "no impure thing can enter into the kingdom of heaven." What distress of all kinds and degrees must be undergone before the soul can attain to that necessary purity or holiness, is as impossible to conceive, as the joy that waits it through all eternity.

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SHORT CATECHISM,

For instructing

Such as are disposed to enter into

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Great End and Design

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C H R I S T I A N R E L I G I O N .

First printed in 1734, at Edinburgh.

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SHORT CATECHISM,

For instructing

Such as are disposed to enter in-
to the great end and design of
the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Question. **W**HAT is man's chief
good and happiness?

Answer. It is to have God to be his
God, and his only ruler and governor.

Q. Why call you that his chief good
and happiness?

A. Because God is the chief good in
himself, and the cause of all good and
happiness, in every soul that is entirely
ruled and governed by him.

Q. What is man's greatest evil and
misery?

A. It is to set up self, as an idol, in
God's room, to be ruled and governed
by it.

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Q. Why

Q. Why call you that his greatest evil and misery?

A. Because the setting up self in God's room is the greatest evil and injustice in itself, and the cause of all other evils and miseries whatsoever.

Q. Who was the first author of this evil and injustice?

A. The devil and his angels, who infected our first parents, and in them all their posterity, with this horrible corruption.

Q. Has this corruption entered deep into man's nature?

A. It has entered so deep, that the very life and being of his nature, as it is corrupted, is nothing else but self-will, self-love, self-interest, &c. in so much that naturally he neither regards God, or his fellow-creatures, any further than as they may serve as a means to please or advance this idol self.

Q. What are the three universal sins wherewith this idol has corrupted man's nature?

A. Covetousness, sensuality, and pride.

Q. By what other names are they called?

A. They are called, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride

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pride of life ; or, the love of riches, pleasures, and honours ; or, self-interest, self-pleasing, and self-esteem.

Q. What are the fruits which these sins produce in mens lives and conversations ?

A. They produce all the vices and crimes which too much abound every where in the world.

Q. Into what estate is mankind reduced by this abominable idol self, and its cursed fruits ?

A. Mankind is thereby naturally reduced into a state of banishment from God and all good ; and of a miserable slavery and captivity, under the power of the devil, and of all evil.

Q. What was necessarily required to the redeeming of mankind from such a miserable state ?

A. It was necessary that the injury and dishonour done to God, by setting up such a vile unworthy idol in his room, should be repaired ; as also, that the idol itself should be so broken down, and cast out, as it might never again usurp the throne of God.

Q. Was it in the power of man to perform both these conditions ?

A. So far from it, that no less power than
than

than omnipotency itself was necessary to perform either the one or the other of them.

Q. Has any one then been willing to undertake, and able to perform so great a work?

A. Yes indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, true God and true man. He alone is the Saviour of the world, and the Redeemer of mankind; who is both able and willing to save to the utmost all that come to God through him.

Q. What moved him to undertake so great a work and labour?

A. His great love to his Father's glory, and his great pity and compassion for lost mankind.

Q. What did Jesus, in order to repair the dishonour done to God?

A. Because man had dishonoured God, by leaving the lowest and last place, which was due to him, and usurping the first and chief place, which belonged to God; therefore, to make satisfaction and reparation, the Son of God left the throne of his glory, the first and chief place due to him; and taking our nature upon him, he descended into the lowest and last place,
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even into the room and place of sinners.

Q. What further satisfaction and reparation made he, when he had put himself in the place of sinners?

A. He meekly submitted himself to all the poverty, contempt, and sufferings, which were due to them; and always honoured his heavenly Father with an obedience and humility, which was more boundless and unlimited than was the pride and disobedience wherewith man had dishonoured him.

Q. What was the most admirable instance of the obedience, humility, and charity of the Son of God?

A. His offering up himself a sacrifice upon the cross, in the deepest humiliations and sufferings both of soul and body.

Q. Was this sacrifice acceptable, satisfying, and meritorious, in the sight of his heavenly Father?

A. It was so acceptable, satisfying, and meritorious, that his heavenly Father found his justice thereby not only satisfied, but likewise indebted to his dear Son; and that he was obliged to grant him, in favour of mankind, whom he so much loved, all grace and glory,
and

and every good thing that he desired for them.

Q. Is it necessary, besides making satisfaction and reparation, that Jesus should cast forth the idol self, with its corrupt fruits, out of our hearts, before we can enjoy the heavenly glory which he has merited for us?

A. It is so absolutely necessary, that neither the mercies of God, nor the merits of Jesus Christ, shall ever bring us to the heavenly glory, till first this great work be effectually begun in our souls, and also thereafter carried on and finished by the power of our Redeemer.

Q. How does our dear Redeemer most usually begin this work in the soul?

A. By awakening the conscience with a sight and sense of its grosser sins and vices, and with the fear of hell-torments, which are due to them.

Q. What must necessarily accompany or follow after this?

A. A firm belief of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, to all them that truly repent of their sins, and forsake them.

Q. What effects do both these produce in the soul?

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against its grosser sins, with a diligent use of such means and mortifications as may help it to be victorious over them.

Q. Doth the soul, in this state, usually make any considerable progress and advancement?

A. Although sometimes it may seem to itself to make considerable progress, yet really it advances but little, so long as its inward corruptions, its inward pride, covetousness, and sensuality, which are the root of its outward sins, do still continue in their strength and vigour.

Q. Where can the soul find a proper and an effectual remedy to purge out these inward corruptions?

A. Only in the Lord Jesus Christ, in his life and doctrine, and in his death upon the cross.

Q. What are those remedies which are to be found there?

A. In the life and doctrine of the Son of God, and in his death upon the cross, there are abundance of humiliations, reproaches, and contempt, to pull down our pride; of poverty, nakedness, and disengagement, to purge out our covetousness; and of labours, pains, and sufferings, to mortify our love of ease and pleasures.

Q. Is

Q. Is it necessary that the soul do truly love and esteem these things, and willingly embrace them, whenever it pleases God to send them?

A. However the inferior sensual part of the soul may grieve and be afflicted, yet the superior part must truly love and esteem them, and willingly embrace them; else it cannot follow Jesus Christ, nor can the love of riches, honours, and pleasures, be truly purged out.

Q. How is the soul enabled and prevailed with to take so bitter a medicine?

A. By the divine light which it receives from Jesus Christ, and which enlightens it in some measure to know itself and the world, and to know God, and to know Jesus the Mediator.

Q. What does the soul see itself and the world to be, in the divine light?

A. In the divine light it sees itself to be nothing but misery and sin, and that it has truly deserved hell; as also it sees the riches, honours, and pleasures, of the world, whereby it has been deluded, to be but mere empty shadows: and both these make it despise the world, and hate itself.

Q. What does the soul discover of God, in the divine light?

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A. In the divine light, the soul sees God to be all infinite goodness, love, beauty, and excellency, and that all its happiness is in him; which makes the soul hunger and thirst, and pant and breathe after him.

Q. What does the soul, in the divine light, discover of Jesus the Mediator?

A. It discovers that Jesus is the true and only way to the Father; and that there is no other way but his poverty, contempt, and sufferings, to cast out man's covetousness, pride, and sensuality; and also that his love to man is boundless and astonishing, in walking so willingly before him in the way of the cross, to bring him unto God: all which constrain the soul to love Jesus, and cordially to embrace his doctrine and example of the cross, as being the only way to its own happiness in God.

Q. When the soul has thus been enabled, by the divine light, to despise the world and hate itself, to love God, and earnestly desire him, and to embrace Christ and his cross, as the only way to the Father, is there any thing further necessary for it to do?

A. Yes, it must, by the divine grace, apply all its vigour and activity to per-

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severe

severe and continue stedfastly in these and such like exercises; till all its activity being much spent and exhausted, it does at length, by degrees, enter in to the passive state.

Q. Wherein consists the nature of this passive state?

A. It consists in patiently bearing the operations, and quietly following the motions and attractions of the divine grace, which now are felt, and perceived very sensibly in it.

Q. What is the exercise, or disposition of the soul, in this passive state?

A. It is to take all its pleasure and contentment in abiding in God's presence, in depending upon him, and leaving itself entirely to his disposal, as a continual sacrifice to his holy will.

Q. What are the fruits and effects of this state in the soul?

A. It does more effectually subdue and cast out the carnal worldly self, with its inward corruptions, and gives the soul a more complete and easy victory over its sins and imperfections, and makes it flourish very sensibly in faith, hope, and charity, in humility, meekness, patience, resignation, and all other Christian graces and virtues.

Q. Has

Q. Has such a soul any thing more to do, but to continue and advance in all these graces and virtues?

A. Its activity having been already spent, it has not much to do; but it has much to suffer, and a more terrible purification to undergo than ever it had before.

Q. Why so?

A. Because in the midst of these sensible divine graces and virtues, there grows up a secret, spiritual, refined, subtle self, which, if God did not prevent it, would at length become more destructive to the soul, and more displeasing unto him, than the former gross carnal idol was.

Q. Wherein consists the malignity of this spiritual self?

A. In robbing God of his glory, by appropriating to itself the graces and virtues which belong to him; and by a secret spiritual pride, taking complacency in its own excellency.

Q. Into what state would this spiritual self bring the soul, if God continue to multiply his sensible graces therein?

A. By degrees, into the state of Lucifer, who was adorned with more resplendent graces than any man on earth

earth can be ; and yet, by this proud spiritual self, he became a devil.

Q. Is the soul able, by its own diligence and activity, to destroy this monster ?

A. This monster is so voracious, so secret, and so subtle, that there is not any thing which the soul can do, by its own activity, to destroy it, but what it feeds upon, and nourishes and strengthens itself thereby.

Q. Who then can destroy it ?

A. God alone.

Q. By what means doth God most usually destroy that terrible monster ?

A. By letting loose the most grievous temptations, and withdrawing all his sensible graces from the soul, and surrounding it on all hands with darkness and troubles ; whereby it is reduced to the greatest agonies and straits.

Q. Are these agonies soon over ?

A. In the former states, the soul had many changes or vicissitudes, of light and darkness, of temptations and consolations, of painful aridities and sensible joys : but in these last trials, the grievous temptations and agonies do still increase, and are never ended, if the soul be of any competent strength

to

to bear them, till it be utterly lost, and perish, as to its own apprehension.

Q. For what end is the soul brought to such a terrible state?

A. That it may learn to be sacrificed, absolutely, without any reserve, to the will and order of God, even with respect to grace, virtue, salvation, eternity, as well as to all temporal things; that so all self, both spiritual and carnal, may be wholly rooted out, and annihilated in the soul.

Q. When self is thus reduced to nothing in the soul, what then becomes of it?

A. When self is really reduced to nothing, which is the only place that of right belongs to it, then Jesus takes possession of his right, and by degrees becomes all in the soul: so that no more self-righteousness, self-interest, self-will, or any thing of self, is to be found in it; but only the righteousness, the interest, the will, and the all of Jesus.

Q. What are some of the principal characters or dispositions of that soul wherein Jesus has recovered the full dominion?

A. A profound peace, a pure disinterested

interested love, and also a child-like innocency and simplicity, whereby the soul, for its own safety, is usually kept from any certain knowledge of its own happy state.

Q. Is Jesus then the only Lord and King of that soul, who rules and governs it absolutely, according to his own will, without any opposition?

A. Yes, indeed; which as it is man's greatest happiness in this life, so it is the great end and design of the Christian religion, and all that seems to be necessary to prepare the soul; and make it ready for the immediate enjoyment of the heavenly glory.

Q. What means must we make use of, whereby we may attain to this great end and design of the Christian religion?

A. That we may attain to this great end, we must make use both of the internal and external means.

Q. What are the most effectual internal means?

A. They are, the inward graces of repentance, faith, and the prayer of the heart.

Q. What is repentance?

A. It is such a true sorrow for our sins, as makes us embrace the means, how

how bitter or painful soever they may be, to extirpate them, and to repair the wrongs we have done by them.

Q. Of what use is repentance for helping us forward to the great end of our Christianity?

A. It is of absolute necessity, for amending, and obtaining pardon of all the sins and faults that are committed through the whole Christian course; but more especially in the beginning of it, when the sinner breaks off his sins and evil habits, and returns to God.

Q. What is faith?

A. It is the evidence of things not seen, even of the all of God, and of the nothing of the creature; whereby the soul, which receives that evidence, believes in God, and puts all its trust and confidence in him alone, and not in the creature, or in any thing that it can do.

Q. What is the most native and immediate effect of this faith?

A. The greater and stronger that this faith is, the more it engages God to take the soul into his own particular care, conduct, and protection; and also it makes the soul the more pliable, submissive, resigned, and abandoned to the

the divine will and conduct in all things.

Q. Of what use is faith for assisting us to attain unto the great end and design of our holy religion?

A. It is of absolute necessity, for disengaging the soul from the creatures, and uniting it to God; and for guiding and leading it safely into that divine union, through all the dangers, delusions, and temptations, wherewith the devil, the world, and our own corruption do continually assault us, in all the different periods of our Christian course; but more especially in the last trials, when the soul can see nothing but death and darkness on all hands.

Q. What is the prayer of the heart?

A. It is an inward conversation, or communication betwixt God and the soul, wherein the soul, conformably to the state it is in, offers up to God its desires, or aspirations, or affections; or simply exposes itself before him, leaving itself wholly to his will: And wherein God corresponds accordingly, by communicating his graces and favours to the soul, as he sees most expedient for it.

Q. Of what use then is vocal prayer?

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A. It is of most necessary use, not only in the public worship, but also in the most private retirements, whenever it may serve as a means to fix our attention, or assist us in the inward devotion and prayer of the heart.

Q. *Of what use is prayer for advancing us to the great end of our religion?*

A. It is of such necessary use from the beginning to the end of the Christian course, that the soul's advancement depends on its fidelity therein; so that whoever neglects prayer can never make any considerable progress in the Christian life.

Q. *What are the most effectual external means whereby we may attain to the great end of our religion?*

A. The most effectual external means are, the holy scriptures, the sacraments, and the other offices of the sacred order of pastors.

Q. *How does it appear that the holy scriptures are a most effectual means to bring us to the great end of our religion?*

A. It appears in this, that as the holy scriptures are all written by divine inspiration, so they do all tend to humble man and exalt God, and to turn man away from self-love and the love
of,

of the creatures, unto the love of God; and do contain inexhaustible treasures of divine light and wisdom, all contributing to that end.

Q. How ought we to read and study the scriptures, so as to profit by them?

A. With an earnest desire to know God's will, for no other end but that we may practise it; and with a humble heart, depending on God for giving us the understanding of them, so far as he sees it necessary for that end.

Q. Wherein are the sacraments useful to us, for our attaining to the great end of religion?

A. They are most useful and necessary, because the awfulness and solemnity of the mysteries which are celebrated in them, do serve to awaken us from our dulness and stupidity, and to raise up our hearts to God; and because, in the due use of them, we are solemnly engaged to our duty, and singularly assisted to perform it, by the plentiful effusion of the divine grace upon all those who with humble and obedient hearts observe these divine ordinances.

Q. What is the evil of despising, or wilfully neglecting the sacraments?

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gleets these holy ordinances, he not only deprives himself of the spiritual benefits and inward graces, which always accompany the humble and pious use of them, but also he thereby ranks himself even amongst the infidels, in that he will not make use of the outward visible signs and symbols ordained by Christ himself, to separate and distinguish betwixt his disciples and all others; and that he will not confess him before men, nor own him to be his Lord and King, in that solemn sacred manner which he himself hath appointed.

Q. Of what use are the other offices to us, of the sacred order of pastors?

A. Of such singular use, that nothing more effectual could be done for us, than to appoint an order of men to feed us with Christ's doctrine, and to walk before us in his steps; and so to teach us, both by word and deed, how we may die to ourselves and to the creatures, that God alone may live and reign in us. And although some may fail in their duty, yet we have the pious labours, writings, and examples, of other faithful pastors, which are still of singular use and advantage to us.

Q. Are

Q. Are there any general means, common to all mankind, for assisting them to attain to the great end and design of [the Christian and] all true religion?

A. Yes, there are the works of creation and providence outwardly; and also an inward remainder of the image of God, which, by the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, is continued with all mankind, as an inward seed or principle of grace, in the midst of their corruption.

Q. What are the fruits and effects of this good principle, in the hearts and lives of men?

A. The more that the good motions thereof, in opposition to the motions of corruption, are followed and obeyed, it becomes the stronger, and God communicates his blessing to it, whereby it has become the spring and fountain of many good things in the works and writings of the heathens: but the more its motions are rejected, and those of corruption followed and obeyed, this good principle becomes the more languid and imperceptible, and sometimes seems to be utterly extinguished.

Q. Wherein do the works of creation and providence serve men as a means whereby

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whereby they may attain to the end of all true religion?

A. In setting plainly before mens eyes the greatness and goodness of God, and the nothingness of man; that his very soul and body, and all the good he has, are God's creatures, and do belong to him; and that therefore he ought not to rob God, by ascribing or appropriating any of these things to himself, but abide in an entire nakedness and poverty of spirit before him, leaving himself and all he hath in God's hands, to be disposed of, and ruled and governed by him, without any opposition, as being the only rightful Lord and King, and true proprietor of all things.

Q. Why then might not a Heathen be saved by the means of these plain truths, searched out, and followed by the good principle of the divine grace within him?

A. How plain soever these truths may be in themselves, yet all men are so blinded with self-love, and the love of the world, that even amongst those who have the light of the scriptures, and the doctrine and example of Jesus Christ to guide them, there are but few who penetrate these truths so fully as they ought to do, and still fewer who

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practise

practise them : Therefore it is not to be supposed that any amongst the Heathen, who have none to guide them, can enter into these truths ; or if any did, and practised accordingly, it is not to be doubted but God would communicate himself unto them, and save them by the grace and merits of his Son, even as he saved the patriarchs, and others his servants of old, before the scriptures were written.

Q. Alas, then, if there be so few every where, who enter into these great and necessary truths, what shall become of mankind ! Is it not to be feared that self and the world shall, in a short time, have dominion over the hearts of all men living on the earth ?

A. In the worst of times God had, and always will have some to serve him ; and although the greatest abounding of all evil is foretold to be in the last days, yet the greatest abounding of all good is foretold to follow after it : for as in the purification of the soul, the darkest night of trials and temptations goes before the brightest day of divine peace ; so, in the church, and in the world in general, after the greatest disorders and corruptions, shall follow

follow the greatest purity and order,
Righteousness, truth, and peace shall
flourish; Satan shall be bound, and cast
out; and Jesus shall be absolute Lord
and King in the hearts of all men.

Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

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